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THE PREACHING OF BISHOP GERALD KENNEDY AS DEFINITIVE  
FOR EFFECTIVE PULPIT COMMUNICATION

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. THE PROBLEM

When the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches asked the question, "Is the present form of church life a major hindrance to the work of evangelism?", it was reflecting the concern of church leaders with the state of the church.<sup>1</sup> Christian leaders throughout the world are aware of a decreasing percentage of those professing allegiance to the Christian faith. It has been estimated that Christians constituted thirty-five per cent of the world's population at the turn of this century. By 1960 the proportion had dropped to thirty per cent. By the year 2000 the percentage will be about twenty per cent.<sup>2</sup>

Concern for the church is not only based upon percentage of decrease in relation to the world's population. The dynamic and qualitative role of the church is also a matter of grave concern. Martin Marty has given a sharp and incisive analysis of the decay and sterility of the church in American Society. His comments cannot be

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<sup>1</sup>Contemporary appreciation for this fact is especially connected with the work of Colin Williams, Where In The World (New York: National Council of The Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1963).

<sup>2</sup>This fact was reflected in an interview with Dr. Franklin Fry of the Lutheran Church in America and was reported in the Los Angeles Times. It is further substantiated by W. Eichey Hogg in One World, One Mission, (New York: Friendship Press, 1960), p. 3ff.

easily disregarded.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Miller has written about the condition that afflicts the church of today. The trends of modern secularity--where there is little unity, no sense of superstition, and an uneasy peace for man--has left its impact on the church. The disparity between the world and the church leaves Miller with the observation that, "we may have to turn our backs on the church in order to find what it once had and has lost."<sup>4</sup>

Further description of the church is indicated by Robert Raines who is definite in his assertion that the church has lost her sense of mission. In accommodating herself to the spirit of secularity and the prevailing cultural climate, the church is failing to provide the motivation for her people to live with meaning in a world without meaning.<sup>5</sup>

The very condition of the church has precipitated a rise in interest to establish a theological basis for the nature of the church.

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<sup>3</sup>A study of the contemporary religious situation in this country is the object of Martin Marty's work, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958). His contention is that the forms of secular culture have monopolized the suburban Protestant church.

<sup>4</sup>Samuel Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1963), p. 36.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Raines, New Life In The Church (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 14.

Books by men like Dietrich Bonhoffer<sup>6</sup> and Colin Williams<sup>7</sup> are being widely read and their views of the church and its mission are generally accepted.

This renewed interest into the nature of the church has brought into focus the dilemma of the modern pulpit. Whether or not the relationship is that of cause and effect, the state of the church demands a closer evaluation of preaching. Since the words in I Corinthians<sup>8</sup> were generally accepted, the priority of preaching as the central life of the church has been unquestioned. Currently, preaching as the central motivation in propagating the Gospel, is being seriously challenged. The validity of the pulpit is being attacked primarily because of what has gone on under the name of preaching. Kyle Haselden, in his book describes the state of preaching as having reached the level where it is a "monotonous and dreaded routine for some ministers and a weekly ordeal for others."<sup>9</sup> The intellectual appeal that was one time encompassed in the sermon has likewise lost its dynamic. Franklin Littell maintains, "Among people who read and write, the sermon is now regarded

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<sup>6</sup>The work of Dietrich Bonhoffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans., R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1963), brings the indictment against the Church accepting the standard of "cheap grace." His own life sacrifice demands a consideration of his view on the church.

<sup>7</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 43ff.

<sup>8</sup>I Corinthians 1:21.

<sup>9</sup>Kyle Haselden, The Urgency of Preaching (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 9.

as a debased form of currency, seldom treated seriously by men of letters and the literary journals."<sup>10</sup>

The marked assumption that preaching has fallen on hard times is an ever recurring theme. Samuel Miller gives ample warning that his Lyman Beecher Lectures not be anticipated as containing "new methods or solutions to the problem of preaching."<sup>11</sup> Bishop Gerald Kennedy speaks of this assumption when he says, "Preaching has been through a time of troubles during the past years, and as severely tested as at any time in the whole history of Christianity."<sup>12</sup>

The work of Karl Barth and C. H. Dodd have contributed immeasurably to the rediscovery of the central importance of preaching. The work of these men substantiates the words of Herbert Farmer, "we are rediscovering the indissoluble oneness of preaching and the Christian faith."<sup>13</sup> Preaching or the activity of proclamation becomes the starting point and the center of Christian theology. It is the medium through which God's Event is actualized. Farmer's reasoning is that "reflection can never establish the actuality of a historical event . . .

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<sup>10</sup>Franklin Littell, Sermons to Intellectuals (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), p. vii.

<sup>11</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. ix.

<sup>12</sup>Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Herbert Farmer, The Servant of the Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 7.

an event can only establish itself--by happening, by being given."<sup>14</sup> C. H. Dodd's New Testament studies on the kerygma have likewise contributed to "the recovery of something deep and central in the mind of the Master Himself."<sup>15</sup>

While the priority of proclamation has been theologically and biblically established, the methods of getting inside the minds of the hearers have not. The dilemma of the modern pulpit is largely a matter of communication. The task of the preacher is to bring the Event and the hearer together. Persuasion becomes the variable.

Accepting the gains that have been made by the current emphasis on proclamation and that it has reminded those who preach "that they are purveyors of good advice, not reviewers of popular books, nor pleaders for generalized and often sentimental good will,"<sup>16</sup> Merrill Abbey demands consideration of communicative skills. "Communicative skills are not optional electives for the preacher who would have his message carry authority."<sup>17</sup> The age in which we live will not accept blind authority. Unless the speaker gets inside the mind of the hearer, the authoritative word is meaningless. It is with this in mind that Merrill Abbey says:

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>Merrill Abbey, Preaching to the Contemporary Mind (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

So long as the preacher's voice comes with coercive insistence from without, it wins little response. Only as the preacher sufficiently understands the conditions of communication necessary to win the identifying response of the listener can he be persuasive.<sup>18</sup>

Bishop James Pike has also presented the claims and priority of communication in preaching. In his work, A New Look In Preaching, he evaluates the problem of the modern pulpit in these words:

Herein lies our problem. Much preaching errs either in presenting the real thing, the true faith, in a way that nobody cares about, or in levelling off everything so that the answers are in no higher terms than the questions. Our problem is how to communicate the Faith in terms of the questions people care about, providing answers rephrased and rethought--not changed, but repackaged.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, it is the purpose of this dissertation to examine the preaching style and representative sermons of Bishop Gerald Kennedy and to test them by applying specific norms of communication. A judgment will be made regarding the adequacy of his preaching in communicating the Gospel in the twentieth century.

## II. DEFINITIONS

The word, preacher, has come to mean the individual who assumes the total complex of ministerial responsibilities within the parish. This may include preaching, administration, public relations, youth work, education and leader in worship. For the purpose of this dissertation, "preacher" will be defined as one who is engaged in the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>19</sup>James A. Pike, A New Look In Preaching (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. xx.

"spoken word."

The Greek word, kerygma, as interpreted by C. H. Dodd<sup>20</sup> has the meaning of that which is proclaimed rather than the action of the preacher. Dodd differentiates between teaching, exhortation and proclamation. In this dissertation, "preaching" will be broadened to include the action of the preacher as well as that which he preaches.

### III. LIMITATIONS

In evaluating the effectiveness of the preaching of Bishop Kennedy, primary importance will be placed upon his spoken sermons rather than the printed word. Printed sermons allow the reader ample time to digest the thought presented by the writer and thus communicate. The spoken word demands instant comprehension if communication is to be achieved.

There are several critical ways of evaluating sermons as to their effective communication. Such matters as the structure of the sermon, the type of sermon, the preparation involved, and the character of the preacher, have all been established criteria. The author will limit this dissertation to the matter of presentation. The tests for effective preaching will be: an urgency that precludes a sense of the dramatic; a simplicity of style; that encourages instant comprehension;

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<sup>20</sup>C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937). Dodd contends that modern preaching is a far cry from that which was done by the apostles. His analysis of the kerygma has become the source for most work done on the matter of proclamation.

and a relevance that engages the mind of the hearer.

The fact that communication in any area is diverse and relative is none-the-less true in the field of preaching. The preacher or the message that communicates with one hearer may be completely irrelevant to another person. Arguments for the establishing of these criteria will remain somewhat inconclusive and arbitrary.

By focusing the analysis on the preaching of Bishop Kennedy as presented in his published sermons, a limitation is evident. The emphasis on communication as the focal point in effective preaching permits concentration upon a more sharply defined body of material, and is the method adopted by the author.

#### IV. PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

The problem of communicating the Gospel has attracted the attention and concern of many writers. Typical studies on this problem are Amos Wilder's New Testament Faith for Today<sup>21</sup> and Samuel Miller's The Dilemma of Modern Belief.<sup>22</sup> Other writers like

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<sup>21</sup> Amos Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955). The thesis of this work is an analysis of the emphases of Jesus, Paul, and John. Wilder attempts to recover the real essence and genius of Christianity. His appeal is for the insights of the past without its mythology and terminology.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, op. cit., Miller shows how secularism poses a problem to faith. Man must find his salvation within the structure of the modern technological world. His concluding chapter gives steps that the minister can take to help his people.

John Hutchison<sup>23</sup> and Jules Moreau<sup>24</sup> have written on the problem of semantic relevance. P. T. Forsyth,<sup>25</sup> James A. Pike,<sup>26</sup> and Kyle Haselden<sup>27</sup> have stressed the importance of communicating the Gospel through preaching.

Bishop Gerald Kennedy has given his own views of effective preaching in his book, His Word Through Preaching.<sup>28</sup> Magazines, such as Time, Newsweek<sup>29</sup> and The Christian Century<sup>30</sup> have evaluated his

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<sup>23</sup>John A. Hutchison, Language and Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963). This book presents a study of sign, symbol, and the meaning in a historical framework. In this last chapter Hutchison deals with the images of the biblical faith.

<sup>24</sup>Jules Moreau, Language and Religious Language (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).

<sup>25</sup>P. T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964). This classic presentation of the preacher and his need for relevance will be used as a source for establishing norms for effective communications given in this dissertation.

<sup>26</sup>Pike, op. cit. This work presents practical ways for communication of the Gospel as well as the need for such communication.

<sup>27</sup>Haselden, op. cit. This work will be used as a source for establishing the norm or urgency in effective communication.

<sup>28</sup>Kennedy, op. cit. In this work, Kennedy gives his own views on homiletics. This will be used as a source in establishing his own patterns of persuasion in this dissertation.

<sup>29</sup>Time Magazine, April 11, 1960 and February 17, 1961; Newsweek Magazine, January 14, 1952. Both of these national magazines present Gerald Kennedy as an outstanding example of the modern pulpit.

<sup>30</sup>The Christian Century, July 13, 1955. In this article, Gill describes Kennedy as one of America's great preachers.

preaching. K. Morgan Edwards wrote an article that was published in The Pulpit<sup>31</sup> describing Bishop Gerald Kennedy as a leading preacher on the West Coast.

The prominence of Bishop Kennedy as a relevant preacher in the twentieth century and the paucity of research on his preaching, merit the consideration of this dissertation.

#### V. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE DISSERTATION

The method of the dissertation is an evaluation and statement of the current interest in effective communication of the Gospel through the spoken word. In Chapter II, selected norms will be presented as being indicative of effective communication. In the establishing of these norms, I intend to use P.T. Forsyth, Kyle Haselden, Herbert Farmer, Jules Moreau, James A. Pike, and Merrill Abbey as sources of authority.

In Chapter III, Chapter IV, and Chapter V the preaching of Bishop Gerald Kennedy will be examined and tested in accordance with the established norms. In testing his preaching by the established criteria an analysis of his views regarding those criteria will be given.

Chapter VI will present the functional value of the study.

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<sup>31</sup>The Pulpit (Chicago: Christian Century Foundation, n.d.), Volume 36, Number 5.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORMULATION OF THE NORMS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THROUGH PREACHING

#### I. BACKGROUND

The task of the Christian, and more specifically the preacher, is to communicate the Gospel of Christ to the believer and the unbeliever. In recent years there has been an increasing awareness on the part of ministers that a new look was demanded at the communication aspect of preaching. In the Lyman Beecher Lectures in 1953, Halford Luccock heralded this note of concern. His concern was more than just casual, it had in it the quality of urgency. In speaking of this matter, he said, "Our time has put on the communication of the Gospel a sense of urgency which is hard to exaggerate ... In some ways that is the alternative before the church, persuade or perish."<sup>1</sup> Luccock is representative of many church leaders who have made serious study of the dynamics of communication.

Christian believers from the very beginning of the resurrection faith, have, in a sense, been occupied with the matter of communicating that faith to the unbeliever. Two dominant factors in recent years have contributed to the increased interest on the part of religious leaders. First, there has been the rapid growth of all kinds of mass

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<sup>1</sup>Halford E. Luccock, Communicating The Gospel (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 15.

media. The mind of man is undergoing a constant bombardment by the inventions and emphases of the modern era. The atomic age has made possible a communication with any part of the world within a matter of minutes. The increased ability of the advertising industry has made possible the persuasion of people beyond calculation. Ideas and products are being communicated to the reader, hearer, and watcher in an astounding rate. "Not even Einstein mathematics could estimate the number of hours spent each week by a hundred million people, reading newsprint, listening to radio comment, watching television, or sitting through movies."<sup>2</sup> Living in a shrinking world, with the possibility of unlimited mass media, given time and money to watch and listen, man sits and expects communication from the world around him. With all such advances in communication from the secular viewpoint, it is only natural that men of religion would be influenced to examine their attitudes toward it.

The second contributing factor to the increased interest in the art of communication on the part of the church has been the discovery and subsequent priority of the place of symbolism in the understanding of man. Many books have been written in recent years on the subject of symbols. A major breakthrough occurred in 1942 when Susanne Langer's book, Philosophy In A New Key, was published. Her understanding of the problem of communication has become a valuable resource for other writers. In describing her approach she says, "The 'new key' in philo-

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

sophy is not one which I have struck, other people have struck it, quite clearly and repeatedly. This book purports merely to demonstrate the unrecognized fact that it IS a new key, and to show how the main themes of our thought tend to be transposed into it."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the novel idea of her perspective is reflected in the understanding of knowledge. The vast accumulation of human knowledge is not to be viewed as a collection of sense reports. It is "a structure of facts that are symbols and laws that are their meanings."<sup>4</sup> This conclusion is reached after an elaborate evaluation of the relationship between science and philosophy. While philosophy has seemingly fallen victim to the age of technology and sense perception, yet, in the study of epistemology as viewed in terms of symbols, a new key is provided. In this connection Langer says, "The formulation of experience which is contained within the intellectual horizon of an age and a society is determined, I believe, not so much by events and desires, as by basic concepts at peoples disposal for analyzing and describing their adventures to their own understanding."<sup>5</sup>

It is from this assumption that Langer moves to affirm the view that symbols have a dual purpose--that of obtaining, as well as organizing the truth. This alters the normal concept of knowledge.

Not higher sensitivity, not longer memory or even quicker association sets man far above other animals that he can regard them as denizens of a lower world: no, it is the power of using

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<sup>3</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy In A New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), p. vii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

symbols--the power of speech--that makes him lord of the earth. So our interest in mind has shifted more and more from the acquisition of experience, the domain of sense, to the uses of sense data, the realm of conception and expression.<sup>6</sup>

Langer has presented vividly the case for the importance of words and ritual as instruments of expression. Both of these are fundamental to the art of preaching communicatively. While ritual is a basic ingredient of religion, it is the use of speech that has priority in preaching.

Words are certainly our most important instruments of expression, our most characteristic, universal, and enviable tools in the conduct of life. Speech is the mark of humanity. It is the normal terminus of thought.<sup>7</sup>

It is the use of words as symbols that man communicates most easily with his fellow-man. The use of words can exercise a great power for good or ill over others. Words can soothe an emotional tantrum or inflame one to a savage rage. Word symbols also have the quality of reflecting social status, heritage, and education. However, the real power of word symbols is their function in the process of conceptualization. Eugene Nida says of this, "It is only when we have acquired a symbol which can serve as a label or identification tag for our conceptions that we can be said to really think."<sup>8</sup>

The contribution of such studies to the matter of preaching is obvious. Aside from the spiritual dimension of preaching, the mechanics of preaching includes the use of words and ideas. Whatever contributes

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>8</sup>Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 3.

to a better understanding of knowledge and the modes of conveying ideas should occupy the interest of the preacher. In the past, the clergy has been somewhat reluctant to listen to secular voice regarding its invasion into the spiritual province. Such factors as have been discussed have broken down much of the resistance and today there is an overwhelming absorption in all aspects of the communication process.

## II. BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

The idea of communication is a basic concept that underlies the whole of Biblical thought. From the Book of Genesis through the Book of Revelation there is reflected a motive of communication. This is seen in the context of revelation. A revelation of the nature of God and his relationship with man. This procedure takes place in the form of a dialogue. "In Scripture God is continually revealed as seeking men out to converse with them, from the story of Eden until the proclamation of the new heavens and the new earth."<sup>9</sup> The understanding of the covenant between God and man suggests the idea that God proposes and man does the accepting, it is predicated upon a two-way communication.

It is to be further understood that divine communication is essentially incarnational. By this is meant that the revelation comes to man not merely through words but through life as well. "Even if a truth is given only in words, it has no real validity until it has been translated into life ... In the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the Word

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

(the expression and revelation of the wisdom of God) became flesh."<sup>10</sup> While the highest level of revelation involves communication through Jesus Christ, this principle is also reflected in the fact that God has constantly chosen human beings and the church as communicative agents to further that revelation.

The communication dimension has also been stressed in the disclosures of Form Criticism. A prime motivation for the development of the Gospels and the establishment of oral tradition was for the purpose of communication. Inherent within the Gospel account was the feeling that the truths involved in the resurrection faith must be propagated. In the formulation of this message, communication was taken into consideration. The accounts in the New Testament deal with the transmission of the Gospel. "More than that, the Gospel was not merely an idea, a message, but an idea in process of communication. We see it portrayed all through the New Testament in terms of motion. When it loses that motion of communication, it ceases to be itself."<sup>11</sup>

In understanding the dynamics of the Christian faith, its very genius must be seen as the sharing, the conveying, the communication of a message. The spread of the faith throughout the Roman world and the development of the written gospel reflect an inherent urgency to communicate that message. Such Scripture reference as, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>11</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 14.

the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>12</sup> And "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,"<sup>13</sup> indicate the concern that the early church felt for propagating the good news of Jesus Christ. The feeling of the church about the necessity of witnessing or communicating is caught by the writer of the book of Acts as he describes Peter and John before the council. Being commanded not to speak or preach, their words imply the basic motivation prevalent in the life of the church, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."<sup>14</sup> This prevailing spirit permeates the Scriptures.

Further analysis of the Biblical pattern is seen in the practical application of this principle by the outstanding persons in the New Testament--Jesus and Paul. While the urgency of communicating the faith is of primary concern, in very practical ways this urgency is implemented by the examples given by the writers of the Gospels and by Paul himself. The message of the New Testament is preserved for posterity in the common language of that day, Koine. The stilted language of the more classical Greek has been forsaken to use a medium that facilitates communication. In supporting the preacher's need to shun highly technical language and the need to stay close to the common speech of

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<sup>12</sup>Matthew 28:19. (Unless otherwise noted, the Revised Standard Version will be used for Scripture references.)

<sup>13</sup>Acts 1:8

<sup>14</sup>Acts 4:20

daily life, Luccock clarifies his position by saying, "Recent New Testament research has thrown much new light on the Koine, the common speech in which the New Testament was written. Its truth carries best in common speech."<sup>15</sup> While the primary concern of the New Testament writers is to convey the Christian faith, they are also interested in presenting an image of Jesus that shows Him as a communicator of truth. This is done by including in the Gospels the parables that have Jesus speaking to multitudes and by depicting the masses of people as appreciating His message. Even though the reaction to the parables by the disciples is at times that of not understanding, the writers of the Gospels infer this as being a lack on their part rather than on any vagueness by Jesus. The general undercurrent of the Gospel account is reflected in these words in Mark, "And the common people heard Him gladly."<sup>16</sup> While this involves the message that Jesus was preaching, it also infers a comprehension on their part. This is further underscored in the comparison between Jesus' preaching and that of the religious leaders--the Scribes. Mark and Matthew, both, have this statement, "And they were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."<sup>17</sup> Again, while the message has its affect upon the crowd, the manner of it and the urgency of that truth have contributed to the communication. This concern for communication is also caught by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. In

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<sup>15</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>16</sup>Mark 12:37

<sup>17</sup>Mark 1:22.

the seventh chapter where the writer tells of the Pharisees sending officers to take Jesus because of His teachings, they return without Him and with the following response, "Never man spake like this man."<sup>18</sup> All of this reflects the concern of the New Testament writers that Jesus, by His message, His person, and His method of preaching and teaching, was communicating with those who heard Him.

While much of the material in the Gospels is the result of editorializing by the writers, the basic content that reflects the methods and message of Jesus is the parables. It was in the use of parables that Jesus touched the lives and the minds of His hearers. Certainly, the early church has taken them to be the vehicle to carry the theology of that time, but nothing else in the New Testament is more closely grounded in a firm historical way to the actual ministry of Jesus.

Joachim Jeremias says of the parables:

The student of the parables of Jesus, as they have been transmitted to us in the first three Gospels, may be confident that he stands upon a particularly firm historical foundation. The parables are a fragment of the original rock of tradition. It is a generally accepted fact that pictures leave a deeper impress on the mind than abstractions. Among the special characteristics of the peculiar charity the character of his good news, the eschatological nature of his preaching, the intensity of his summons to repentance, and his conflict with Pharisaism.<sup>19</sup>

The Biblical aspect for communication is also encouraged in the view of Paul that is given in his writings and by the writer of the Book of Acts. While this too reflects a message in process, ample material is

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<sup>18</sup>John 7:47.

<sup>19</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), p. 11.

presented to show Paul as being interested in communication as a person. A specific instance that indicates Paul's ability to communicate is recorded in the twenty-second chapter of Acts. Paul was in extreme danger of his life from mob violence in the city of Jerusalem. He starts his defense and then the Scripture says of the results: "And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence . . ."<sup>20</sup> From the practical viewpoint the incident demanded that Paul speak in Hebrew, Halford Luccock uses the incident to portray another meaning--"When the message came in their own language and not in an unfamiliar tongue, they heard it. It is always so. When language has no roots in human experience, when it offers no first aid to the senses, there is small response."<sup>21</sup> The entire incident involves Paul's understanding of the psychological aspect of communication. The dynamics of the situation demanded a vocabulary that would communicate immediately. Further evidence that can be gathered from the personal involvement of Paul in communication is seen in his desire to mediate himself to all people. This theme occurs several times in his writings and indicates that Paul, for the sake of communication, would adjust himself to his hearers. In his letter to the Corinthians, he says:

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, as without the law, (Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that

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<sup>20</sup>Acts 22:2.

<sup>21</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 34.

I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.<sup>22</sup>

The expression of Paul's desire to communicate with his hearers is further revealed in the classic example of Paul preaching on Mars Hill.

While many scholars indicate this passage of Scripture in Acts 17 to be the efforts of the writer, it still would not be beyond the capabilities of a man with the education of Paul. Confronting his hearers in their own language and engaging them in dialogue in the fields of which they were most conversant could not help but be intentional on the part of Paul. His concern was not only with the message of the resurrection faith but also with the vital communication of that faith.

This concern for communication is also admonished for his converts and fellow-workers. In writing to the church of Galatia, Paul tells them, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."<sup>23</sup> While the Pastoral Epistles are no longer viewed as being written by Paul, they do reflect a dependence upon him. Eric Titus states, "Paul is evidently greatly admired by the author of the Pastorals. The fact that he writes in Paul's name indicates the degree of authority which he attributes to the apostle."<sup>24</sup> Whether written by Paul or written by one who admired him, I Timothy gives a further admonishment that the Christian engage in communication.

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<sup>22</sup>I Corinthians 9:19-22.

<sup>23</sup>Galatians 6:6.

<sup>24</sup>Eric Titus, Essentials of New Testament Study (New York: Ronald Press, 1958). p. 231.

While the command is directed at those who have material wealth, the Scripture urges them to be "willing to communicate."<sup>25</sup> The followers of Paul could in no way divorce themselves from the minds or the needs of people. Communication with them was of great importance.

To understand the Biblical authority for communication, the place of the Spirit of God must be considered. Luccock says:

The communication of the gospel is God's activity. Never forget that . . . . As St Paul puts that basic truth for all time, 'we have received . . . the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit.' If that truth drops out of the mind of the preacher, the pulpit is reduced to the ghastly predicament of living on its wits.<sup>26</sup>

The presence of the Spirit has priority in the biblical view of communication. This begins with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The source of it is God himself. However, it is God's spirit that communicates with men today. It is only through the supernatural activity of the Spirit that man experiences the transforming grace of God. The preacher is involved in the communication to the extent that he bears witness to that truth. It is the Spirit of God that directly communicates with the hearer and mediates this divine truth. "Hence, the communication in which we are involved is not only supernatural in content (in that it is derived from God); it is also supernatural in process, for the Spirit of God alone makes this message to live within the hearts of men."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>I Timothy 6:18.

<sup>26</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>27</sup>Nida, op. cit., p. 229.

## III. THE FIRST TEST--A SENSE OF URGENCY

Kyle Haselden says, "the waning of the power and the effectiveness of our preaching is directly related to our lost sense of the urgency of the gospel."<sup>28</sup> To declare this is not to infer a kind of urgency that is often equated with the bombastic. A sense of urgency is more than and different from the preaching that engages in hysterical utterances. It is the intense earnestness, sincerity, and immediacy that demands the attention of the hearer. It is this quality that lifts a sermon from the casual expression of mundane matters to the proclamation of eternal verities. A sense of urgency on the part of the preacher is demanded if the hearers are to be alert to the consideration of truth. The classic example of this norm for effective preaching is the Apostle Paul. He reflects the spirit of urgency in writing to the Corinthians, "for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."<sup>29</sup> Regardless of the power inherent within the spoken word, it takes on added force when empowered with a sense of urgency. He was a man possessed by a message and a motivation that he proclaim that message throughout the world.

And this mood, now so infrequent in our preaching, marks every so-called great sermon produced by the church, from Peter's sermon to the rulers, elders, and scribes gathered in Jerusalem to George A. Buttrick's 'Lonely Village' preached to faculty and students at Harvard University. Old as they are, such sermons as Chrysostom's

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<sup>28</sup>Kyle Haselden, The Urgency of Preaching, (New York:Harper and Row, 1963), p. 35.

<sup>29</sup>I Corinthians 9:16.

'Excessive Grief at the Death of Friends', Augustine's 'The Recovery of Sight to the Blind', Luther's 'The Method and Fruits of Justification', and Bunyan's 'The Barren Fig Tree', still grip us with their pressure and insistence even in written form.<sup>30</sup>

If preaching is to communicate with the modern mind and by so doing, save itself, it must have within it this sense of urgency. No rhetorical devices can be substituted for a kindred spirit to that which possessed Paul.

In the life of the minister, this sense of urgency begins with a serious appraisal of his role as preacher. Before he can engage in urgently communicating the Gospel there must be an inner conviction of his own function as the proclaimers. Studies in recent years have verified the observation that the Protestant minister is suffering from a lack of particular identity. His role has been divided into pastor, preacher, and priest; then sub-divided into a multitude of responsibilities. Most ministers declare that there are exceptions to this, "but they admit that the average minister is a victim of vocational amnesia: he does not know who he is."<sup>31</sup> Because of this lack of identity the clergy has allowed itself the luxury of dabbling in activities only remotely related to preaching the Gospel. Kyle Haselden has outlined several results that follow such a fragmentation of purpose. First, there is the ministerial accent on amiability. In this role the minister attempts to become all things to all people. His desire is to be accepted by everyone. This desire may reflect a basic compassion for

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<sup>30</sup>Haselden, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

people, but it can lead to a deadly evil. For the sake of approval, he dilutes his personal conviction and minimizes the dynamic of the Gospel.

If the minister purchases that image at the expense of the gospel, if he is lured into speaking pleasant words on all occasions and to all people to preserve that image, he may remain acceptable to the people but he is no longer pleasing to God. God requires that his will be declared whether or not it pleases the people and whether or not its declaration makes the minister favorable in the eyes of the people.<sup>32</sup>

The second result of a fragmented purpose is described as a resort to sentimentality. In this role the minister assumes the stance of a big brother and attempts to offer a helping hand to mankind rather than become a servant of Jesus Christ. In this relationship the minister may use many communicative skills and devices. Merrill Abbey tells of a prominent minister who delivered a sermon on maturity in terms of the thinking of Harry Overstreet. "The materials sparkled. The work was brilliantly done. The devices for fitting smoothly into the comfortable grooves of the popular mind were aptly wrought. But there was no authoritatively distinctive ring of the Christian gospel."<sup>33</sup> This type of moralism can establish a type of preaching that soothes rather than convicts, that appeases rather than warns, and which destroys the inner conviction of the minister that he is under orders of God.

Perhaps the most reflective consequence of the modern day is the third designation--the propensity to activity. Trying to find his function and having a degree of honesty in his search, the minister has

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>33</sup>Merrill Abbey, Preaching to the Contemporary Mind (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 31.

a ready out--becoming busy. He becomes a jack of all trades and assumes so many forms and so many responsibilities in the church and the community that he forgets who he really is. When the sense of personal conviction begins to want, it is easy for the minister to become engaged in semi-secular pursuits. He becomes somewhat of an ecclesiastical YMCA director or a goodwill ambassador for the denomination. At the heart of most such activities is the lessening in the heart and mind of the minister of his particular function as a servant of Christ.

The clergy's primary and pre-emptive mission is not to be the custodian of a culture of the architects of a better world. Ministers are not sent to be lackeys of every good cause, a signatories of excellent resolutions and worthy petitions, or even primarily to be champions of justice. They are sent to speak for that Christ who is sovereign over man's whole psychic and social realm.<sup>34</sup>

All this suggests that the activity a minister can engage in is really a compensation for inner anxiety. This tension has been caused by the inevitable conflict between his person and his profession. In the ministry the two become one. "A man becomes a Christian minister when he responds to the imperious, specific, and particular claim of God. That claim demands not only the man's talent and his energy but simultaneously and inclusively his soul."<sup>35</sup> He becomes a "slave" or "prisoner", to the challenge and service of Jesus Christ. In accepting this "call" or conviction or sense of urgency, the minister is unable

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<sup>34</sup>Haselden, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

to slough off the purpose of his calling without bringing untold anxiety upon himself. If the fragmentation of purpose is to be eliminated, it will only be so when he assumes the claims of Christ upon himself without reservation.

Paul's words to the Romans give a description of his attitude toward preaching. "I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."<sup>36</sup> Underneath these words runs a theme of obligation that Paul assumes and anticipates. Undoubtedly there were a number of motivations behind Paul's statement, but Romans 1:1 give a clue as to why he was so eager to preach to them at Rome. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ."<sup>37</sup> This is typical Pauline signature. He is the servant of Jesus Christ. He is possessed by the conviction of obedience to the heavenly vision; from this relationship followed a personal sense of urgency.

A further aspect of the sense of urgency that should be present is implemented by the preacher's awareness of the sacramental view of preaching. The sense of urgency is multiplied when the preacher accepts the belief that God in Christ is present in the sermon. Dietrich Bitschl calls this the "glory of preaching." God speaks through him and this experience, and the preacher becomes a new creature. God's love is offered and proclaimed to the hearers in the sermon. The world is unable to offer this, but God declares His love through the sermon

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<sup>36</sup> Romans 1:15.

<sup>37</sup> Romans 1:1.

as revelation. "The sermon participates in the revelation. This is a dangerous statement, and yet it is precisely what the Bible calls our commission to preach."<sup>38</sup>

It is this dimension of preaching that adds to the spirit of urgency in the life of the preacher. It is the awareness that he is part of a divine event that enables the preacher to transcent the reliance upon purely communicative techniques. In this connection the sermon is not so much the culmination or expression of something said as it is something done. While it does involve the efforts and abilities of man, it is more precisely the action of God. Merrill Abbey makes this thought the basis for any description of a theology for preaching. "Any adequate theology of preaching builds on the conviction that God not only commissions and sends preachers; He is himself present in true preaching."<sup>39</sup> The supreme essence of the sacramental view of preaching, then, is that preaching is more than argument or the elaboration of ideas. It is through preaching that the supreme event of God in Christ finds continuance in present experience.

P. T. Forsyth, in his book, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, has sounded forth this note on the sacrament of preaching. The art of preaching is viewed as sacramental rather than sacerdotal.

He mediates the word to the Church from faith to faith, from his faith to theirs, from one stage of their common faith to another. He does not there speak to un-faith. He is a living

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<sup>38</sup>Dietrich Ritschl, A Theology of Proclamation (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), p. 21.

<sup>39</sup>Abbey, op. cit., p. 35.

element in Christ's hands (broken, if need be) for the distribution and increment of Grace. He is laid on the altar of the Cross. He is not a mere reporter, nor a mere lecturer, on sacred things. He is not merely illuminative, he is augmentive.<sup>40</sup>

Forsyth contrasts the Catholic form of worship with the Protestant and states the Protestant form will always be at a disadvantage "so long as people come away from its central act with the sense of something done in the spirit-world, while they leave ours with the sense only of something said to this present world."<sup>41</sup> When preaching is really sacramental, that which is done in the continuance of the supreme event transcends the words of the preacher. This sermon is more than a memorial or exposition, it has within it the prolonging of Christ's sacramental work. It is the real presence of Christ that elevates a speech into a sermon and a lecturer into a preacher. In this transformation it is the Spirit of God that continues His work in Christ.

We do not repeat or imitate that Cross, on the one hand; and we do not merely state it, on the other. It re-enacts itself in us. God's living word reproduces itself as a living act. It is not inert truth, but quick power . . . . Every true sermon, therefore, is a sacramental time and act. It is God's Gospel act reasserting itself in detail.<sup>42</sup>

This same element of the sacramental view of preaching is presented in the thinking and writing of Gerald Kennedy under the idea of the dramatic. Kyle Haseldon also describes the ministry of preaching as being drama. The Christ event is declared to be the supreme drama of all time. It is the preacher's task to proclaim that dramatic

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<sup>40</sup>P.T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 54.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

event. "He is commissioned to say to men that something has happened which, though never repeated, never stops happening."<sup>43</sup> This description of the dramatic is not to be confused with what is often called "dramatic preaching." This type of preaching dwells on the sensational and is usually guilty of an egocentric performance. The theatrical cannot be substituted for the declaration of this supreme drama that is the focus of all real preaching. The role of the preacher in the drama is that of augmenting or introducing the drama.

In clarifying his view of the dramatic, Bishop Kennedy gives several insights into his idea of the dramatic. 1) The drama is an act that cannot be divorced from life. If the act is only academic in nature then it ceases to be dramatic. "The historical event is only dramatic when it makes a difference to the present, or when, in some way, it is still influencing the present."<sup>44</sup> 2) The dramatic is always that act which has a complete meaning within itself. There is not a meaning that is fragmentary. 3) "The dramatic thing must mean something in the sense that it will make a difference to us personally whether we react to it positively or negatively."<sup>45</sup> In drama the destiny of man is involved. It shows the conflict in which man is struggling. In these crises, God meets man and it is dramatic. 5) The drama deals with the emotions of man as well as his mind. This provides for stimulation

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<sup>43</sup>Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 22.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

that is based on anticipation and memory.<sup>46</sup> All of these viewpoints are related to the dramatic appeal of the Gospel of Christ. "All of this means that the Gospel is dramatic, in that it centers in an action which provides the clue to the meaning of God and life."<sup>47</sup> Christian preaching is not the reciting of a catalog of sins or the rehearsal of man's ethical duties. It is the proclamation that God has come through Christ and He continues to meet men and women where they are.

In Haselden's analysis of the supreme drama he describes it as drama in three dimensions; the peril, the promise, and the active agent. This, a recording of human existence and as found in the Bible, reveals: Man's Peril, God's Promise, and God's Act.<sup>48</sup>

In this connection, Haselden introduces another aspect of preaching that contributes to the sense of urgency. It is seen in an understanding of the peril in which man finds himself. This compels a sense of urgency in the preaching of the servant of Christ. Man is a sinner and is in need of being warned. He must be warned because of the certainty of his peril. It is this condition that impells the preacher to a sense of urgency in his preaching. This urgency is not viewed as the holding of a club over the heads of the hearers, nor is the purpose to scare people into church. "It requires of us great care in our preaching to warn and yet not to encroach upon God's exclusive right to

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>47</sup>Haselden, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

threaten, to identify the judgment without presuming to execute it, to speak of God's wrath without exhibiting man's revenge.<sup>49</sup>

It is the answer that the preacher mediates to the hearers that gives the preacher his evangelical thrust. The preacher is consumed with urgency because he declares an adequate message to meet the needs of mankind. In evaluating Christianity, the chief criterion is not its ethical results and amendments of living. "These are but the consequences of it, the fruits of its reconciliation. It is evangelical in this way--that it begins with reconciliation. It is the destruction by God in Christ of sin's guilt and sin's distrust, and sin's blocking of the sky."<sup>50</sup> The appeal of the preacher is to the actual conscience of the hearers that senses personal despair and is aware of the world's moral tragedy. Man in this condition must not only be warned of the consequences that follow his alienation from God in this life, he also must be saved and empowered. The message of the preacher is that God's act of grace is as real and as powerful as the real, historic presence of sin. To the natural man the proclamation of salvation is foolishness. "He finds all salvation to be but the great recuperative effort of man's inalienable divinity, his indefectible essential identity with God."<sup>51</sup> To many the act of saving grace is nothing more than the act of faith in themselves and their ability. In response to this argument

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>50</sup>Forsyth, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

P. T. Forsyth declares, "Against all which I would say, in a word, we have to be redeemed into the power of appreciating redemption, and appropriating the greatest moral act man knows--the Cross."<sup>52</sup>

Armed or possessed by this message of salvation the preacher cannot but be motivated by a sense of urgency. With jealous care he accepts the mantle of being God's messenger with a truth that not only warns but cures the disease in man's life.

The sum of this ingredient of the urgency in preaching has on occasion been called a passion for souls. It is this very emotion that Halford Luccock places in the forefront of the preacher's ability to communicate. "Communication depends on the force and the heat of the preacher's passion to evangelize. It all rests back on that."<sup>53</sup> Communication is based on the sense of urgency that grips the preacher by his conviction that what he says makes an overwhelming and eternal difference when the message is received. Many preachers speak of truth but their very nonchalance tells the worshippers that it doesn't make too much difference if they accept it or not. It is this very passion for souls that lifts preaching from a diatribe against the peculiar faults of a congregation, from a soft spoken diet of ethical pabulum into the proclamation of divine grace that changes lives.

Luccock suggests a by-product of this type of urgent preaching. Preaching with the urgency rekindles the flame for preaching as well as

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>53</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 41.

the flame of preaching. Without a sense of mission the weekly sermon becomes sheer drudgery.

Then the preacher has touched bottom, emotionally and spiritually. His Saturday night dirge becomes 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps on this petty pace' from Sunday to Sunday. But if he is seized with the conviction that something momentous is at stake, preaching can be an exciting wrestling match .... The passion of an evangelist will save the sermon from the last indig-  
<sup>54</sup>nity, that of having the deadly drip of a tired commercial.

The loss of this sense of urgency has contributed to the demise of the modern pulpit. Too much preaching has degenerated into nothing more than a resume of the week's news or an evaluation of the current best selling novels. This stifles the flame of urgency that God places upon the minister. It is the declaration of the gospel that proclaims reconciliation for needy mankind that impells the preacher to mediate this message. His own sense of urgency is communicated to the hearer as well as his message.

#### IV. THE SECOND TEST--A SIMPLICITY OF STYLE

In attempting to preach the gospel of Christ the preacher is involved in a paradox. There is a seeming contradiction between the complexity of Christian thought and the need to present it in simplicity. The creeds of the church, the liturgical patterns, and the centuries of theological debate all testify to the complexity of the Christian dogma. In spite of this the ever present task of the preacher is to preach in a way that communicates with the mind of the hearer.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

To do this the message of Christ must be presented by the preacher as simply as possible. There are certain situations where the basis for communication must be a level of complexity, but to the average hearer and the average congregation, a key to communication is simplicity.

The reason for this is found primarily in the nature of oral communication. This can be seen in contrast with the communication that is possible through the printed page. In the written sermon or essay, the reader can re-read the passage that might have been obscure in an oral sermon. In the auditory experience the sermon idea is seldom repeated and must be understood on the instant. Merril Abbey presents this axiom in sermon communication:

He may declare his message with the power of a coldly intellectual process which wins respect for his thought, but this cannot assure acceptance for his gospel. The pulpit has strengths and weaknesses of its own, different from those of the printed page. The argument that carries conviction in print may not persuade from the pulpit; for the sermon is an auditory experience which must be grasped by the mind at the moment of hearing or not at all. The listener to a sermon cannot go his own pace, as does the reader of a book, but must travel at the preacher's pace or be lost.<sup>55</sup>

This suggests that every aspect of the sermon, whether words, structure, delivery, or thought, should be motivated by the principle of simplicity. The object of the sermon is not to enhance the reputation of the preacher or offer him opportunity to display his intellectual skills.

It is to be the conveyer of truth.

James A. Pike has also advanced this theory in the preparation and delivery of sermons. In support of simplicity in delivery he

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<sup>55</sup>Abbey, op. cit., p. 33.

reminds the preachers that the people are in an oral situation.<sup>56</sup>

The place of simplicity in communication is seen first in the presentation of ideas. Much of the complexity and vagueness in sermons is due to the lack of confining ideas. If the preacher is to persuade the mind he must define the scope of his thought. "And this is done by bringing some aspect of the gospel into such contact with a need it fulfills, or an idea it contradicts, that the two speak to each other."<sup>57</sup> If the theme is broad and undefined, likely the sermon will deal with generalities that speak to no one, and contribute to the complexity of the sermon. Simplicity of expression can produce profound ideas and suggestions that develop into an excellent sermon, and one that is easily understood by the hearer.

There is a clever temptation that seduces the minister; that is the temptation to be profound at the expense of being understood. Their thought has lost the strong appeal of concreteness and has taken on an ambiguity that dazzles but never disturbs. Halford Luccock describes this approach:

So many, in frantic effort to be profound, succeed only in being muddy. This strange yearning to be difficult, and thus receive the accolade of incomprehensibility, has never perhaps been more frankly expressed than in the envious sigh of Hugh Walpole, the novelist, who wrote, 'I'd rather be like Virginia Woolf than anything else on earth. How nice if people said, 'This new novel of Hugh Walpole's may be very beautiful, but we can't be sure be-

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<sup>56</sup>James A. Pike, A New Look In Preaching (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 72.

<sup>57</sup>Abbey, op. cit., p. 33.

cause we can't understand a word of it' . . . I'd truly love that!<sup>58</sup>

It is this type of preaching that deals in abstractions and contributes to the lack of communication in the pulpit. Herbert Farmer has called the preaching that delves mainly into abstractions "the greatest curse of all our preaching."<sup>59</sup> The concentration on the abstract enables many who are in the congregation to become uninterested, and bored because of the absence of concrete situations in which they are concerned. God meets mankind not in the abstractions but through persons and the daily routine of living. Among the factors that contribute to the lack of concreteness is the Bible itself. Many of the ideas are given in terms that are reflections of the gnosticism of the day in which they were written. The Bible also brings to mind a picture of life that is at variance with the world in which we live. The Bible is oriental, our world is not. All this contributes to other-worldliness and abstractness that militates against communication with the hearer. While the task of speaking concretely is not impossible, it is extremely difficult. The suggestion of Farmer offers the beginning of help:

I counsel you therefore to go through your sermon when it is written and look hard and long at every abstract word. Often it will not be possible to alter it to a concrete word, for abstract terms are part of the dispensable coinage of thought and even the simplest mind uses them, but it may be possible to alter it to one more familiar. Yet, even so, it is surprising how often an ab-

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<sup>58</sup> Luccock., op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>59</sup> Herbert Farmer, The Servant of the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 71.

stract term can be altered to a concrete one, and how great is the resultant gain in vividness and power.<sup>60</sup>

A further clarification of this matter is the use of simple words to portray the ideas that are preached. Ideas that are profound can be expressed in simple language. The Apostle Paul caught the importance of speaking in intelligible language when he wrote to the Corinthians, "I rather speak in five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, then ten thousand words in a tongue."<sup>61</sup> The challenge of speaking in words that convey meaning and yet are understood demands effort and diligence on the part of the preacher. Bishop Kennedy states, "It is the unprepared and the pretentious who speak the long words and have the involved style. It takes patience and much searching to find the simple words which are the best words."<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps the greatest preacher of the eighteenth centruy was John Wesley. Simplicity itself can very easily describe the preaching that he did. While Whitfield has been described as the accomplished orator and possessed of such abilities that a congregation would cry at the way he said, "Mesopotamia", the results and impress on the minds and hearts by Wesley was accomplished by his simplicity. John Telford says of Wesley, "As a preacher, Wesley was remarkable for his simplicity of style and his force of argument."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>61</sup>I Corinthians 14:19.

<sup>62</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 75.

<sup>63</sup>John Telford, The Life of John Wesley (New York: Hunt and Eaton, nd), p. 315.

In his book, John Wesley: Preacher, W. L. Doughty includes a number of comments from the writings of John Wesley that reveal his attitude toward preaching. In speaking of the need for simplicity in language, Wesley says:

Longer sentences utterly confound their intellects; they know not where they are. If you would be understood by them, you should seldom use a word of many syllables or a sentence of many words. Short sentences are likewise infinitely best for the careless and indolent. They strike me through and through .... Neither are the dull and stupid enlightened nor the careless affected by the long and labored periods half so much as short ones.<sup>64</sup>

This characteristic plus the stress by Wesley upon good voice and enunciation established a pattern for Methodist preachers. At one time, Dr. Samuel Johnson was of the opinion that it was the preaching of the Methodist ministers that accounted for the success of the Methodists. This concern for simplicity in ideas, words, and mannerisms has often been illustrated by the concern of Wesley in preaching to the common people. Doughty writes of Wesley's asking a servant girl to stop him when she did not understand certain words. After much stopping he was finally able to communicate on her level of understanding.<sup>65</sup> In clarifying this emphasis of John Wesley, Doughty uses a statement from Wesley's second series of sermons:

I should purposely decline, what many admire, the highly ornamental style .... Only let his language be plain, proper, and clear, and it is enough. God himself has taught us how to speak both as to manner and the matter ... This is the style, the most excellent style, for every gospel preacher. Let him aim at no

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<sup>64</sup>W. L. Doughty, John Wesley: Preacher (London: The Epworth Press, 1955), p. 142.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

more ornament than he finds in that sentence which is the sum of the whole gospel, 'we love him, because he first loved us'.<sup>66</sup>

No aspect of the sermon is more important than the delivery. In this dimension of persuasion, simplicity is also of the essence. While the battle between those who read sermons and those who preach extemporaneously has lasted through the centuries, the need in the modern pulpit is such that preaching directly and simply is more adequate. James Pike is of the opinion that preaching extemporaneously is the more desired and more effective style of delivery. This manner of delivery enables the preacher to speak directly to the hearers and he can evaluate the degree of communication. There is simplicity in this approach that identifies the preacher and the congregation. "There is something about the I-Thou, direct person-to-person relationship that opens a channel for the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Who is the Holy Ghost: He is the saint esprit de corps. He is the light and warmth in the fellowship, and thus can inspire right directly from the fellowship."<sup>67</sup> A further purpose in this type of presentation is that it lends itself to greater communication. The natural expression of most American preachers is to use a vocabulary in speaking that is based on Anglo-Saxon derivatives. The ultimate purpose is to reach the hearers and this is done more effectively by speaking to them directly.<sup>68</sup>

Farmer is of the opinion that preaching must be geared to a one-

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>67</sup>Pike, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

to-one relationship. Anything that tends to "muffle the impression that the preacher is speaking directly to the individual listener, as man to man, as the saying is, or, as we might say, as personal will to personal will, is to be avoided so far as the special conditions of preaching allow."<sup>69</sup> It is almost impossible to have this encounter and merely read a sermon. This does not mean the dispensing with notes or manuscript in the pulpit.

The alternative to reading is preaching and you can preach from notes and even from the full manuscript, if you have taken the trouble to do what I spoke of earlier, namely to absorb it, and if your mind is dominated by the sense of this central I-Thou relationship.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps the outstanding example of the modern pulpit, who advocates preaching without notes is Bishop Gerald Kennedy. He contends that this style of delivery adds to the effectiveness of the preacher as well as his authority. To be sure, there is the added cost of preparation and diligent application of the rules of public speaking, but the results are worth the efforts involved. "This whole concept of the Christian message as good news demands a delivery free from manuscript and notes . . . . My brethren, it is a crucial and glorious day in any man's ministry when he decided to stand on his feet without support save preparation and the Holy Spirit, and preach."<sup>71</sup>

Accepting the dictum of the nature of preaching laid down by

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<sup>69</sup> Farmer, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>71</sup> Gerald Kennedy, God's Good News (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 35.

Phillips Brooks, "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men,"<sup>72</sup> and preaching will carry the most weight and be more effective in its communication when it flows directly from the preacher to the congregation.

One further element needs to be added to establish the principle of simplicity. The sermon must have in it illustrations that speak to the mind and the heart of the hearer. Modern man is surrounded by visual attractions and metaphors that relate ideas. If the preacher is to speak simply and proclaim the gospel of Christ, there is of necessity a place for illustrative material. This is a means whereby the preacher is able to make his sermon simple and concrete. There is a danger that accompanies the use of illustrations, that of using just any illustration to have an illustration. This is not acceptable. An irrelevant or unsuitable illustration is worse than none at all. Too many stories can tend to make the sermon a reasonable facsimile to a Rotarian's speech. Bishop Kennedy's observation as to the use of illustrations is, "As a means of clinching a point, or of holding the interest, it is necessary to show the meaning of the message in a particular instance."<sup>73</sup>

This norm for effective communication is predicated upon the ability of the hearer to understand and respond to the message of the preacher. The very limitations under which the congregation listens to

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<sup>72</sup>Phillips Brooks, Eight Lectures On Preaching (London: S-P-C-K, 1959), p. 5.

<sup>73</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, op. cit., p. 144.

the sermon demands that the sermon be presented as simply as possible. The academic contributions that often prevade the pulpit are little more than an attempt on the part of the minister to broadcast his previous week's reading. Simplicity is a basic norm for the communication of the gospel of Christ.

#### V. THE THIRD TEST--RELEVANCE

Perhaps the most significant factor in the communication of the gospel through preaching is the matter of relevance. It is not without cause that a common charge against preaching has been that of irrelevance. The church and therefore the preacher has been spending a maximum of time and interest on matters that are of little concern to the mass of humanity. The clergy has offered answers to a certain type of problems, but as James A. Pike says, "There is nothing more irrelevant than answers to questions people haven't asked."<sup>74</sup> In a sense the norm of relevance is the foundation on which any other norm must rest. It makes little difference if there is a sense of urgency and the message is delivered with simplicity if the subject under consideration is irrelevant to the congregation. The preacher and the congregation must be on the same wave length or the time of both has been wasted.

Into this problem comes the current debate relative to the relevance of the gospel. There are those who contend that the gospel must be preached to a living situation. By this is meant that the

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<sup>74</sup>Pike, op. cit., p. xviii.

gospel preached in Los Angeles, to be relevant, cannot be preached in the same way that it was preached in the sixteenth century. The contention is that the difference must be more than the change of an Elizabethan language into the Los Angeles vernacular. On the other side of the debate are those who contend that the gospel has within it the capacity to be applicable to man in any age, and any attempt to adapt it will only impair its force. "The theory is that the proclaimed Word needs only to be proclaimed since it carries in itself the power to relate itself to the needs of all men in all times."<sup>75</sup> This is the feeling projected by those who reject any talk of relevancy.

Dietrich Ritschl fairly well represents this school of thought. In his book, A Theology of Proclamation, he declares in bold terms that method and technique have little to do with the preaching of the Word. "The content is what matters; form and technique will grow out of the content, not vice versa. To preach exclusively on the basis of a Biblical text--as long as we are in this world, and not yet in the 'heavenly city' without a temple--is surely not a matter of technique, but the very condition of authentic preaching."<sup>76</sup> The mistake of such an observation is in the word "will" that suggests the unqualified producing of right form and technique. Content will not of itself create the methods of delivery that communicate with the hearer. Such an emphasis is a wholesome reaction to the type of preaching that has

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<sup>75</sup> Haselden, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>76</sup> Ritschl, op. cit., p. 8.

basis except the attempt to preach on life-situation themes. Forsyth spoke strongly against this when he observed, "We must all approach to our age, but woe to us if it is our age we preach, and only hold up the mirror to the time."<sup>77</sup>

It is an accepted axiom of Christianity that it is not the preaching that makes the message germane. The way one handles that divine truth does not affect its validity, but the "actuality and the vitality of the gospel do not prevent the ministry from being superficial, the sermon from being impertinent, or the church from being peripheral."<sup>78</sup> The preacher is not the creator of new truth, he does not originate anything new in his preaching. He is more like a craftsman or musician whom God has chosen to proclaim the majesty of His composition.

In the consideration of relevance as a norm for communicative preaching the preacher must first of all evaluate the matter of semantics. As suggested previously, in recent years there have been new discoveries in the field of languages. The preacher must consider the meaning of words, both intellectually and emotionally, if he is to be relevant in the presenting of his message.

The struggle with the prevailing language patterns is not new. From the very beginning of the Christian church the theological language in use had its identity determined by outer conditions. "In the

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<sup>77</sup>Forsyth, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>78</sup>Haselden, op. cit., p. 73.

earliest generations, the semantic structure of the theological language employed was almost exclusivley Semitic and mythic.<sup>79</sup> With these words Jules Moreau posits the idea of the relationship of the Christian faith with the semantics of Israel. It must be remembered that the thought patterns and ideas of the early church had their origin deep within the roots of Judaism. The next step in the communication of the gospel in a relevant way with the prevailing culture was the identity with the Hellenistic world. In the transference of ideas from one cultural pattern and social structure to another it is to be understood that there is a risk involved. That risk is the prostitution or change of the basic concepts that were originally engendered. Moreau supports this by stating, "it is true as is demonstrated by the various systems against which the church had to pronounce. Nevertheless, this was a small price to pay for the gains registered by the church in communicating with the pagan world."<sup>80</sup>

The next confrontation that the Christian faith faced was with the Hellenistic world. It was Paul and his contemporaries that became the bridge to this world. They were associated with the Jewish element of the faith and thus could understand the basic concepts of Christianity.

They knew Greek because it was their native tongue and the tongue in which they had acquired their knowledge of Judaism in which they had been reared and out of which they had come. For that

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<sup>79</sup>Jules Moreau, Language and Religious Language (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 186.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

combination of reasons, they preached and wrote a Semitically oriented gospel in a language to which, linguistically at least, it was not altogether foreign because of the Septuagint.<sup>81</sup>

It was not long until the post-Pauline literature began to have a place in the life of the church. Such writings like James, the Pastorals, First Peter, Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel reflect a strong divergence from the earlier generations. Each of these writings indicates a stronger tie with the Hellenistic world than the writings of Paul. "It is not until well into the second century that the distinction emerges clearly, but a backward glance from that point reveals a slowly but developing pattern. The gospel had begun to feel more at home in the Greek world."<sup>82</sup>

This change in the approach to the gospel has been described as both an asset and a liability. The problem side of the ledger is seen in the change of emphasis from that which was originally revealed in the gospel account. The risk of emasculating the teachings of Christ by superimposing Hellenistic philosophy upon them was taken and the course of Christianity followed a new path. However, without such changes brought about by the Greek and Latin fathers, the church would have stagnated.

These men made it possible for the church to think in Greek and eventually in Latin. Consequently, the church could not only present its gospel to the pagan world, but it could also defend that gospel in open conflict with the pagan world's best thinkers. As an outstanding example of this process, one need only read the Contra Celsum of Origen, which is virtually unrivaled by anything produced in the secular world during the third century.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

It is Moreau's contention that from this period through to the Reformation, the infiltration of classical thought was pervasive and dominated the church through those centuries. It was the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, who brought a breakthrough. "One of the most important aspects of the Reformation was the recapturing of the normative character of the Bible . . . Luther and Calvin both contributed mightily to breaking the hold of the classical Greco-Roman semantic structure upon the mind of the church."<sup>84</sup>

The failure to completely break the thought forms of classical thought was and is due to the failure of those who succeeded the Reformation leaders. The challenge of this day is to renew the battle and to engage in every attempt possible to communicate the gospel in theological terms that are relevant to the world. As the early Christians took the gospel and couched it in terms and ideas that related to the world in which they lived, the modern preacher must find that original truth and place it in a context that communicates with the world. In finding the basic structure of truth, the Form Criticism movement has been an invaluable aid. Among the many contributions they have made has been the refusal to accept the semantic of the thirteenth, the ninth, or even the third century as normative of the Christian faith. The basic problem in this matter of communication is that the secular world has moved through the centuries in scientific and social understanding, while the church has held onto its antiquated terminology

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

that was communicative hundreds of years ago.

The language that is to be used to communicate the gospel in these days must at least be as effective as that which was used in an earlier era. "If it is to be effective for Christian communication, it will have to reflect all of human knowledge and experience including that of the scientific era in which we now live. If it is to be effective for Christian communication, it will have to reflect the peculiarly Christian myth as we now understand it."<sup>85</sup> To do this the preacher must not only be aware of the insights posited by Biblical scholars, he must also relate the advances of the linguistic science, the philosophy of existence, studies in psychology, and the understanding of the social sciences to bear upon the message to be proclaimed.

Underlying the entire principle of semantic communication is the awareness of its dynamic nature. It is in a continual process.

The translations of the gospel into the vernacular of the day and the philosophies of the day must be constant. The thought forms and patterns of living in the future will be as different from ours today, as the patterns of today are different from those of centuries past.

The norm of relevance is not limited to the theological affirmations of the church. The semantic structure of the world to which the gospel language is addressed must also be considered. While the first criterion for relevance dealt with the problem from the standpoint of

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

the church, this dimension of thought is viewed from the position of the secular world. What kind of a world is the minister attempting to communicate with? What are the interests and concerns that plague the modern mind?

The term most commonly used to describe the modern world is "secular." This word with all its shades of meaning is dominating the attention of the preacher whether he recognizes it or not. The world in which he lives is decidedly secular. The government, that in other days has felt the influence and subtle guidance of the church, has cast off any such influence and dominance. The scientific world has long ago liberated itself from any supposition that might tie it to religious faith. The art world that in former years was motivated by concepts and traditions of the church has likewise cast off this influence. The vast world of commerce and industry has now come to full stature and goes its way without regard to religious tenets. The concerns of modern man have reached a point where any relationship to the religious faith of the past is purely accidental. "The world operates very well in most areas without paying any attention at all to religion. In fact, faith has been put into a pocket, to which the world may revert at odd times when and if it pleases. It is no longer a consistent or pervasive element in our life."<sup>86</sup> This is an apt description of the secular age in which man finds himself. The presuppositions of the past, as far as religion is concerned, have been eliminated. The task of being rele-

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<sup>86</sup> Samuel Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1963), p. 5.

vant means, then, that the preacher is "trying to ground his word on precisely the premise which a secular world omits."<sup>87</sup> The secular world intimates to the preacher that life is organized apart from God.

In attempting to understand the ingredients that comprise this secular world, the observations of three distinguished writers will be given.

A. James A. Pike--He has divided the secular world into four factors. The first includes what he calls the remnants of old factors. Among these are the frontier type of attitude that rejected any kind of liturgical emphasis and a degree of anti-intellectualism. This factor also includes the secularizing of education. "The impression that you can sufficiently explain life by talking about man and things without God, flesh without spirit, time and history without eternity."<sup>88</sup> The teacher, many times by default, has communicated this kind of knowledge to the student. A further remnant that pervades the secular society is an obvious ignorance of the Bible. Bible reading and family prayer have been neglected as a vital part of living. This lack of attention has allowed a Biblically ignorant church and society to become the object of preaching. In speaking of Biblical incidents, "The hearers never heard of them, they know nothing about them."<sup>89</sup> This very ignorance creates a roadblock to relevant preaching. Along with these remnants is the feeling among many laymen that there is a disassociation

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<sup>87</sup> Gene Bartlett, The Audacity of Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Pike, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

between their religion and other areas of life. Religion for many is not suppose to have anything to do with social or political issues in which they are involved.

The second factor is described by Pike as being unfavorable. Included in this point is the spirit that is described in such books as The Organization Man, and The Hidden Persuaders. The first book tells of the highly organized type of life that prevails in American culture. The second book presents the methods and techniques whereby conformists are made and the people are molded into accepted patterns. In this category Pike also includes the trend among church people to rely upon a self-serving approach to religion. This indicates a God that can be used to the betterment and advancement of the individual. "He is offered in well-selling religious books, over the radio, and television, and in some pulpits, as a resource among resources; a sleeping pill, a shot in the arm, or tranquilizer."<sup>90</sup> This is not to intimate that God is not interested in the welfare of the Christian, it does reflect a disposition on the part of many to place God in the subsidizing business.

In the third analysis of the secular world, he introduces those items that are neutral. This includes the language that is prevalent among hearers today. They have little comprehension of the type of religious verbiage that is often used. It is completely foreign to their patterns of understanding. An adjunct to this is the fact that

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

people are more interested in persons than they are in ideas. A more mobile population is also affecting the attitudes and desires of the people to whom the preacher preaches. The rapid increase in mobility and the demand to move within a short span of time demands a new approach to what the preacher emphasizes. This means "that in our teaching program, in our sermon services, in our arrangements for getting to people, we have to take account of the fact that our contact is often of limited duration."<sup>91</sup>

The fourth factor that highlights the secular society is called, "trends which are favorable." While the millennium is not around the corner, the recent statistics indicate a growth for the church. This indicates that more people than ever are within hearing distance. Combined with this is the events of our time that demand a serious approach to monumental problems. The cold war demands serious thinking on the part of the people. "The answers for human freedom in the face of the threat of the domination of things are still in the same old place, but we've got to bring them out, and the fact that they are relevant again so poignantly and sharply is an advantage."<sup>92</sup>

The comments by a man of the stature of James A. Pike, in the church world and in his own denomination, adds weight to his evaluation of the secular society to which the preacher must direct his sermon.

B. Halford Luccock--In his analysis of the world to which the

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

preacher must minister, he suggests four ingredients in the diagnosis. The first has to do with a sense of insignificance that is typical in the lives of humanity. The sense of personal importance and individuality has been lost. Man has reached the point where he feels of little importance to himself or to mankind in general. Man has become only a cog in the assembly line. "It is not only in the army and navy that men are expendable. In much thinking and writing the Economic Man has been superseded by the Statistical Man. And the role of a statistic is not a happy one."<sup>93</sup> The sense of oppressiveness that has been caused by the impersonal forces of the world, creates a vacuum that can be filled with the message of truth.

The second aspect as suggested by Luccock deals with the prevalence of insecurity, anxiety, and fear in the lives of people. This anxiety has become prominent because of the political unrest in the world as well as the turbulence of social issues. This too is reflected in much of the literature that is current in America. This spirit is motivating the masses to search for a leader that will eliminate the insecurities that plague them. "We know all too well and shudder at what is called 'parasitic insecurity', the desire for a leader, which has turned loose rivers of blood in the world."<sup>94</sup> This anxiety and fear has also been a reflection of the breakdown of the home life. Thousands of people have been reared without the presence of a father or a mother. This has had its affect on the stability of the individual

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<sup>93</sup>Luccock, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

and the mass of society.

A further ingredient in the description of secular man is his sense of emptiness. Those values that were dominant in the lives of past generation have now been lost.

The traditional world has collapsed and a satisfactory new one cannot be created. The mark of a large part of this generation is not rebellion so much as a painful lament for lost certainties and a fumbling search, through a blindfold, for a new faith. Contemporary literature has made many moving presentations of this emptiness at the center of life.<sup>95</sup>

A further compliment of this thought is the feeling of futility of life and the absence of hope that pervades the existence of modern man. This can be merely a person wallowing in his own self pity, but to many it is a very real thing. The study of psychology has brought into focus the needs of so many people with this dilemma. These are the persons "to whom life has lost its savor, but who plod along, often hugging their discontent to themselves, who cannot realize their own lives, but add much to the uncertainty and unhappiness of others."<sup>96</sup>

It is to these needs that Luccock presents the challenge of the modern pulpit. The demand is for the preacher to have open ears to the needs of people and speak a message of hope and certainty.

C. Samuel Miller--Perhaps the most incisive discourse on the problem of relevance in recent years has been the contribution of Samuel A. Miller in his book, The Dilemma of Modern Belief. It is against his analysis of the secular age that he posits his understanding

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

of Christian faith. His thesis of understanding for the secular age is that there is a double meaning to secularity. This age contributes to the destruction of certain aspects of the faith, it also has within the potential of aiding the preacher of the gospel.

There is no doubt in his mind as to the condition in which religion finds itself:

Certainly every aspect of the religious spirit has lost its intensity. Prayer is no longer the first resort in an emergency but the last, after all the scientific possibilities have been exhausted. The sacred has evaporated from all but the most intimate and numinous of experiences. The fear of the bomb is more intense than the fear of God. Conversion and redemption have been replaced by education and adjustment. The church itself has become acculturated, confirming the established mores of respectability rather than raising the question of man's inadequacy in the light of God's eternal judgment.<sup>97</sup>

In further analysis of the secularity of the age, Miller suggests three indications of it. The first is the loss of unity. The sense of unity was lost in the advent of secularity that followed the Renaissance and the dissolution of medieval culture. Not only science, but art and philosophy as well, rebelled against the religious unity that had traditionally bound them together. In this sphere of development, the church and state were also divided. In the evolution of history, "we now stand at the point where we are unable to identify, for the most part, the religious factors in the political sphere of government, ... nor do we know how to recover the religious implications of a scientifically objectified nature."<sup>98</sup> This trend to atomize and lose the perspective of seeing life in its totality is seen in the current trend in

<sup>97</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

philosophy. This historic monitor of thought is now confining itself to minimum concerns like the syntactical logic of language. "Secularity is the loss of unity both in the consciousness of man and equally in the culture derived from his sensibility."<sup>99</sup>

The second loss to the secular world is defined as superstition and mystery. With the advent of empirical science man has been brought to the point where "there is a disciplined sanity of mind at every level of human experience."<sup>100</sup> Life is no longer mysterious. It can be seen in a test-tube with exact calculations as to its durability. This trend has obscured meaning through symbolism.

In science the basic and unalterable dimension of mystery as the primary character of existence tends to be formulated as merely the unknown, which is pushed back by expanding knowledge, while in religion its loss is manifested in the reduction of worship to an ecclesiastical entertainment unattended by awe or contrition.<sup>101</sup> The natural result of the loss of mystery is the rise of all kinds of techniques. This means the development of a method that can reduce the mystery of a reality to a technique whereby it can be effectively handled. This destroys the freshness that man's individuality can bring to life. It narrows down science to the field of technical research. "In religion it gives rise to a particular kind of ecclesiastical secularity by which all the institutional elements of faith can be manipulated with virtuosity and apparent effectiveness without the slightest reference to religion itself."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p.11.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

The third dimension of Miller's view of the secular age is a basic alienation and independence. Without a sense of unity and the quality of mystery in his life, man loses knowledge as to where he is. Intuitively he desires to make some kind of sense out of life. When he is unable to do this, he becomes uncomfortable. The conditions that confront man are such that he feels outside the world. He is baffled by it and looks at the literal world as not being his. The word that best describes man in these circumstances is that used by Hegel, alienation. This is attached to man by Kierkegaard, Dostoevski, Nietzsche, and the existentialists, the psychiatrists, and countless novelists.

The name used generally to describe the type of human consciousness that derives from alienation is 'rebel'. Our recent history, someone has said, resembles nothing more than a series of rebellions. Our literature is crowded with these figures that fascinate and horrify us--Rasolnikov, Ahab, Brand, Meursault.<sup>103</sup> It is within this framework that the social and political rebellion finds its rebellious expression. Justified in many cases to be sure, but evidence also of the rebellion that has come because of his alienation.

As suggested above, the secularity of this age has a double meaning. With every negative suggestion, a positive dimension arises. Miller sees in the alienation the rise of independence. Man achieves a freedom and a sense of fulfillment along with the sense of aloneness. While man's unity was disintegrated, he has found a thrust of energy

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

that is creative in art forms, government, science, and even in religion. "Superstition is swept clean with the coming secularity, yet with the loss of superstition there also goes the mystery by which existence is deepened and reality in its total aspect respected."<sup>104</sup>

Miller is anxious that all the advantages of such an age be realized. Relying on the insights of Bonhoeffer and the "world come of age,"<sup>105</sup> he sees this age as the recipient of the gospel in a new and compelling way. Every indication that is given of the secular age becomes the ground of his being as a religious person. It is within this structure that he is to find salvation. "The fact that we are no longer children or adolescents, propped up and sustained in our credulity by such assertions as direct invasion, or of immediate and implacably authoritarian acts of the divine, means that we have entered a new stage of religion."<sup>106</sup> The faith that man has is in a God who is not separate from existence but a God who permeates the common structure of life.

These men have outlined the scope of the society to which the preacher must minister. This is the kind of culture to which he must communicate. If the message of God in Christ is to be relevant, a deep understanding and sympathy with the forces that motivate mankind must prevail in the minds and hearts of the preachers.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

## VI. SUMMARY

Preaching which assumes that proclamation is all that is necessary, disregarding the nature of contemporary consciousness, I think is too facile and too arrogant to commend itself as more than an ecclesiastical assumption.<sup>107</sup>

While there are those in the church and the ministry who still accept the pattern that is denounced by Samuel Miller, the main stream of Protestant and Catholic leaders are absorbed with the need of communication. The contribution made by those engaged in the philosophy of linguists have aided in this desire. The clergy has assumed responsibility for the insights given by recent studies of Scripture to see the Biblical authority for a renewed interest in communication. Form Criticism has revealed that the matter of communication provided much of the motivation for the writing of the Gospels.

The primary examples in the New Testament as representative of effective communication are Jesus and Paul. The effectiveness is seen in the fruits and results upon those who listened. Their concern is reflected in numerous accounts in Jesus' words and the writings of Paul. In the final analysis the communication of the gospel rests upon the work of the Spirit of God. It is God who takes the message of the preacher and touches the minds and hearts of the hearers.

In establishing the norms for effective communication, it is to be remembered that the number established is arbitrary. The suggested ones can be divided and then divided again. The first norm for

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. x.

consideration in effective communication is a sense of urgency. By this is meant preaching that is earnest, sincere and has the quality of immediacy about it that demands the attention of the hearer. This is a mood that not only characterizes the sermon, but grips the preacher as well. He is a preacher under orders and is constrained by God to preach or his soul is in jeopardy. In spite of the strain on the preacher that has been caused by the fragmentation of his purpose, he must accept his primary task of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. The constant pressure of the ministry reveals itself in the tendency toward amiability, sentimentality, and a propensity toward activity. No amount of work can be a substitute for the urgency that is upon him to speak for Christ.

The sense of urgency is further based on the sacramental view of preaching, itself. In this the preacher accepts the idea that in preaching, God in Christ, is present. The sermon is a continuation of the revelation of Christ. The preacher is thus a part of the divine event. This understanding reinforces his concept of the urgency of preaching. He cannot take the task with indifference. He is not merely engaged in a memorial service for a historical event, nor is he merely engaged in the exposition of Scripture that may or may not have a word of relevance. He is proclaiming the gospel; actually prolonging Christ's sacramental work.

The mood of urgency is also upon the preacher because of his awareness of the peril in which man finds himself. The preacher, in need of warning and possessing knowledge of the promise of life in

Christ, proclaims and declares the remedy that can transform and save. There is no uncertainty as to the peril man faces. He cannot save himself by his own faith or ability. By his acceptance of the redemptive act of Christ, the preacher becomes aware of this dimension through the sacramental act of preaching. A passion for the lost comes upon the preacher as he prepares to mediate the gospel. This passion has within it an urgency that thrills and motivates him with zeal to proclaim the old message with earnestness and immediacy.

The second norm for effective communication is a simplicity of style. The preacher is involved in the paradox of preaching the complexity of redemption in simplicity. The very nature of oral communication demands the norm of simplicity. In the preacher-congregation situation it is absolutely necessary to have immediate comprehension on the part of the hearer. He cannot go back and rethink a particular sentence as a reader could go back and re-read a sentence. If the preacher is to communicate, it is imperative that he present the message in simplicity.

This simplicity is projected through the words used as well as the illustrations presented. Abstract thinking is on the decline in the modern day and this makes it necessary for the preacher to be as concrete as possible in his presentation. The preacher must follow the example of Paul, John Wesley, and other great preachers in using words that convey meaning to the average hearer. It is pretentious on the part of the preacher to assume that the congregation has the level of theological training that he does.

The structure of the sermon is also to be simple if the maximum degree of communication is to be achieved. This structure has about it the ingredient that gives direction and purpose to the sermon. It becomes more than a conversation. Beginning with the general proposition, the preacher moves his thoughts in logical sequence to the particular.

This dimension of communication is further revealed in the style of delivery on the part of the preacher. The bombastic, oratorical approach of a few years ago is no longer acceptable. Animated conversation that is geared to one-to-one relationship aids the preacher in his communication. To achieve this relationship, the preacher can aid his cause by achieving the art of preaching without a manuscript or with the use of limited notes. As a singer is better able to communicate the message of the song by visibly facing and confronting the audience with his undivided attention, so the preacher is better able to communicate with the audience by confronting them without the barrier of a manuscript or voluminous notes.

A further aid to simplicity is the use of relevant illustrations, particularly illustrations that contribute to the concreteness of the sermonic ideas. The need for illustrations is justified because man is appealed to by all kinds of visual aids. The illustrations act as a visual aid to underscore or clinch a point or idea posited by the preacher.

The third criterion established for effective communication is a pervading relevance. The most common charge against the modern pulpit is that of irrelevance. The preacher is spending a maximum of time on

marginal issues or he is answering questions no one is asking. The conflict in recent years between the polar positions of the proclamation of the kerygma without respect to relevance and the more accepted need for speaking relevantly, probably will never be settled. The need for communication cannot be ignored. The preacher does not originate truth but he must be concerned about making it relevant to the world in which his message is preached. To achieve this there is necessity for a re-evaluation of the kind of language used from the pulpit. The struggle with semantics goes back to the time of the early church. The pattern of theological verbiage has been dominated by classical thought through the centuries. It is the task of the minister to use language that is relevant to the culture in which he finds himself, and without changing the basic truth of the gospel.

The matter of relevance is also applied to the world or society that is the recipient of the message. James A. Pike, Halford Luccock, and Samuel Miller have been used as sources for evaluating the cultural and sociological patterns of the modern ear. From their observations, one can establish a composite that adequately describes the modern man to whom the minister must preach. The gospel will necessarily be irrelevant unless the preacher understands this.

1. The modern man is motivated by a spirit of secularism. In the destruction of the mystery of life he has followed the path of materialism. This is not limited to the Communistic philosophy but prevails also in the thinking of the American man.

2. Man, in arriving at the pinnacle of academic knowledge, is

now prepared to eliminate any presuppositions he may have had about religion. This is reinforced by his lack of knowledge about the Bible. A few generations ago the preacher could appeal to the hearer's understanding of the biblical account. In man's modern culture this is no longer possible.

3. The scientific advancements of the age and the increase of automation have contributed to making man a digit, or a statistic. This tends to make him lose much of his individuality and pressures him to submit to the patterns of conformity. Man's feeling of insignificance and loneliness is a natural result.

4. Anxiety and fear are diseases of the mind that plague the modern man. The Cold War situation adds much to the feeling of insecurity that man possesses. Man carries with him a constant fear, often, with a dread of oblivion hanging over his head. As a by-product of this man is in need of greater psychological understanding.

5. The rapid growth of industry and the increased ease of travel have contributed to a mobility that is new to this generation. Today, the average family moves frequently and this tends to eliminate any deep roots. This rootless condition creates problems for the church and for the preacher who is thinking or working on a long-term program. This condition also hampers the minister who is involved in a series of sermons.

6. The prevailing mood of man is one of meaninglessness. This is seen in the literature that reflects the age. Life is viewed as being futile; to many men there is very little hope. Life, in these

terms, must be lived for the moment. In this vein of thought, the moral value of the church and family heritage are quickly erased.

7. The spirit of the age is further outlined in the mood of rebellion that grips the people. This is often identified with the teenager but it prevails in all of man's culture. Socially and politically man is rebelling against the past and what he has in the present. The old patterns have little attraction and interest for him. The preacher of today cannot ignore the issues that are of concern to those who listen to him. The mood of rebellion must be understood, if not accepted, by the relevant preacher.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SENSE OF URGENCY IN THE PREACHING OF BISHOP GERALD KENNEDY

#### I. THE PRIORITY OF PREACHING IN HIS MINISTRY

There is little doubt in the minds of those who know Bishop Gerald Kennedy but that preaching has the highest priority in his ministry. Having begun the art of preaching at eighteen years of age and a sophomore in college, he has continued to preach throughout the years of his ministry. No words more adequately describe his feelings toward preaching than those given in his autobiography:

I have been a preacher and a teacher. Preaching is better, I have been preacher and writer. Preaching is better. I have been preacher and administrator. Preaching is better. When about once in a year I have a free Sunday, eleven o'clock finds me restless, nervous, and unhappy. I try to remind myself that a man needs a change of pace--to say nothing of his congregation. But there is a kind of panic takes over as I think what life would be without preaching. My friend W. E. Sangster of England wrote in the preface of his last book, shortly before he died: 'I am a traveling preacher, unable by reason of sickness, either to travel or preach.' I knew those were the saddest words any preacher could write.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection it is with a trace of pride that in the preface to his Lyman Beecher Lectures he accepts the plaudits of his peers, by recognizing that his contemporaries see him as a preacher of exceptional ability. This is done in preference to any ability he may have as an administrator or a writer. His reaction is positive, "Thus be it

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 140.

ever! Preaching is the supreme calling and the greatest joy. May preachers young and old know this and never doubt it."<sup>2</sup>

There are two main ways in which Bishop Kennedy further reveals the priority of preaching. First, there is the relationship that preaching has to the redemptive action of God in Christ. He accepts the Barthian thought to the extent that Christianity cannot lose the aspect of preaching without surrendering its essential quality and its true nature. Christianity, because of its very nature is to depend on preaching. This is further substantiated by the place of preaching in the traditional Protestant approach to worship. "Until we change the Protestant tradition, the pivotal thing about the worship service is the sermon. This is the place where the spiritual power is produced for the running of the machinery and there is no substitute for it."<sup>3</sup>

In the acceptance of his role as preacher the minister in effect becomes God's representative. The accepted understanding by many in the modern world of a success motivated man who is equally adept at preaching his sermons before a service club, is anathema to him. The preacher does not argue for his own ideas, rather he is the proclaimers of truth. He assumes the cloak of the prophet in his proclamation. "So the man who is proclaiming the judgment of God and announcing His will for men ought to have something of the authority and objectivity

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald Kennedy, God's Good News (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 21.

of a judge. We are not the spokesman of One who is seeking clients, but we are witnesses for One who has revealed truth."<sup>4</sup> In this understanding of his position the preacher is the possessor of a compulsion that motivates him to proclaim the truth of God in Christ.

A strong aspect of his relation to the preaching sacrament is seen in Kennedy's understanding of the art of preaching as a part of the revelation. The preacher is a part of God's plan to reach those who are called unbelievers. The Christian and non-Christian is confronted by God through persons. The preacher is a proclaimer of an occurrence which was God breaking into the processes of life and he is also the medium through which God entreats humanity. This brings the preacher under the strong judgment of God. It becomes a compulsion and a responsibility. With this in mind Kennedy states, "Much good preaching could become great preaching if this sense of God entreating through me to you were felt. This is what bring eternity into the present and makes the contemporary word take on eternal significance."<sup>5</sup>

The second way in which Kennedy shows the priority that preaching has in his ministry is through the stress that he places on preparation and presentation. In his mind the preacher is a workman and an artist and must prepare in accordance with his calling. Discipline is demanded of the preacher if he is to adequately mediate the truth of God to the congregation. His preaching must rest on the foundation of

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<sup>4</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 78.

<sup>5</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 10.

discipline.<sup>6</sup>

There is a level of excellence below which no man needs to sink, and it is never necessary for his friends to be ashamed of him. All of this, however, means that underneath the grace of expression there has to be the law of organization. The good news of law for the preacher proclaims that if he will do his work faithfully and follow the disciplines of his craft, God will always find him a useful servant.<sup>6</sup>

Bishop Kennedy is a man who is concerned about many issues and a man who has a wide range of secular interests, yet, it is with regard to preaching that he exhibits a flaming zeal. He is first, last, and always committed to the primacy of preaching. "The church needs all sorts and conditions of men to do its work. But it will die without preachers, and a democracy cannot exist without free and flaming pulpits."<sup>7</sup>

## II. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THIS URGENCY

### A. The Nature of Man

Bishop Kennedy's view of man is one of radical optimism. Man stands before God as capable of sublime service or severe degradation. The basic ingredient in man is his ability to express his freedom. It is God that has made him this way. "He could have made a creature amenable and docile, but He chose to fashion a creature free, often unpredictable, sometimes uncertain, but capable of divine aspirations

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<sup>6</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet., p. 140.

and creative dreams."<sup>8</sup> Man is free not because it is a nice thing to be free but because it is essential. If men are to achieve their heritage then they must have the freedom to choose and to enjoy or suffer the consequences of that freedom. To achieve the freedom for which man has been created means that he masters himself as well as his sin.

He is of the persuasion that a basic tenet in Christian theology is God's concern for man. The manifestation of divinity in Christ is an expression of God's love for man. As a preacher of eternal truth, this thought has primacy in the preaching of Kennedy. Following in the wake of this proposition is his belief that no man is hopeless. It is blasphemy on the part of the preacher to presume so. This theme allows an optimism to be reflected in his preaching. The urgency of awakening men to their true potential undergirds the preaching premises. In speaking of man, he says:

No matter how he may appear to us, God's miracle of grace can work for him as it has worked so often for us. One reason Jesus disturbed his contemporaries was his unwillingness to look down on certain groups in society. Strange how men could get things so completely twisted and how they could say he blasphemed because he saw possibilities in men and dared to offer them the power and forgiveness of God.<sup>9</sup>

Along side his strong views on the potential of man is his realistic view of the sinful nature of man. He has no polyanna

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Christian and His America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 34.

<sup>9</sup>Gerald Kennedy, Who Speaks For God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 122.

impression of the sinlessness of man. It is not his contention that by education man's basic nature can be changed. His doctoral dissertation was on the subject, Human Nature According to Saint Paul, and it gives an insight into his thinking on the nature of man. He is of the opinion that Paul is not nearly as pessimistic as some would want to think. In his thesis he says, "Although he has little confidence in natural humanity, he recognizes the fact that natural man has many admirable qualities, and instead of being actively evil, he is in a state of weakness . . . the doctrine of total depravity is not Pauline."<sup>10</sup> He later asserts that Paul was not Barthian in spite of the fact that Barth would regard Paul as his chief authority. He says, "In minimizing human power and responsibility; in regarding faith as merely passive obedience; and in denying the intellectual element in salvation, Barth presents a distorted Paulinism."<sup>11</sup>

The natural result of this view is to regard sin as a positive force in the lives of people. He is of the opinion that Christianity has rightly diagnosed sin as pride. He takes a strong stand against those who would eliminate the presence of sin in life. The sinful nature in man is not something that can be outgrown or ignored. It is not so much the mind of man that causes eternal trouble but the heart of man. This condition and need of man is not sporadic. Man stands in constant need of divine grace. Man can only stand as he relies upon

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<sup>10</sup> Gerald Kennedy, "Human Nature According to Saint Paul" (Ph.D. dissertation, Hartford Theological Seminary, May, 1934), p. 137.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

the grace of God. This undoubtedly casts man in the role of a sinner:

The greatest problem for any man is himself. No matter how much I want to be good, no matter how much I promise myself to do better, I always come up against a horrible weakness in my soul. Faith in myself has to begin with this Christian word to every man: 'You are a sinner'.<sup>12</sup>

It is such an understanding of man that provides the object of his concerned preaching. Impelled by man's desperate condition the preacher proclaims an adequate gospel.

#### B. The Adequacy of the Gospel

A strength of Gerald H. Kennedy's preaching is the strong answer that he posits for the condition and need of man. He is not content to deal with academic generalities, or leave the solution to the problem for indefinite debate. In strong terms he suggests the answer to be Jesus Christ. It is through Him that man's eyes are opened to realize his true potential. It is through Christ that, "we learn at last who we are, and the answer to the riddles of our nature. Made in God's image and created to have fellowship with Him, through prayer we enter into worship."<sup>13</sup> While the closest one can come to pinpointing his Christology is the traditional, "God was in Christ," he clarifies this as meaning that it is through Christ that men have hope of salvation. It is from His life that men are able to understand the love of God and it is through His death that power is available to

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<sup>12</sup>Gerald H. Kennedy, I Believe (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 30.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

change evil men into sons of God. It is the preaching of this gospel that serves as a continual source of inspiration for the preacher. He is not engaged in mere platitudes about a nice Jesus, but proclaims a redemptive message that can change the worst of sinners. Kennedy endorses the view that it is this declaration which is found in the Bible. Undoubtedly spurred by study of Paul, he states that the central presentation of salvation as found in the New Testament is given by Paul. "The central significance of Christianity as a religion of salvation is kept ever before us by the Pauline Epistles. It is not too much to say that whenever Christianity has been at its best, it has been roughly speaking of the Christianity of St. Paul."<sup>14</sup> It is in this connection that he stresses the grace of God. Salvation is appropriating the grace of God that has been made available through His action in Jesus. Grace is described as being of such a nature that, "no sensitive person expects it as his just due, but always he knows that it comes utterly undeserved."<sup>15</sup>

The strong preaching of salvation is not limited to a religious experience. It must issue in a life of conformity to the standards of Christ. It is with this motivation that his concern for social problems is underscored. "Salvation that does not effect a man's daily action has no value for God or man."<sup>16</sup> A by-product of the Christian

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<sup>14</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>16</sup>Kennedy, I Believe, p. 24.

relationship is the meeting of the problems of life victoriously and without fear.

There is little room, in Kennedy's understanding of the adequate gospel, for the Christian to be content and smug in his faith. While one accepts the dictum of being fortunate to have such faith, he also is the possessor of a dissatisfaction.

Faith in Christ is wrought out of life at its worst as well as life at its best. It does not bring us ease or contentment. It puts our life forever under the searching light of one who was perfect. It opens our heart to the terrible, gentle love of one who never lets us go. It means we shall never know one hour of satisfaction with our success if we buy it with our moral failure.

But when we have faith in Christ, we shall never again walk alone. When we bring our life under Christ's control, we go ahead--and what is more, we go ahead on the right road. Every year we walk with him makes his companionship dearer. I believe that God was in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

### III. PREACHING FOR A VERDICT

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not just another option that confronts the minds of men. It is THE living option. To accept it, there is life and strength; to refuse it, there is death and a failure to achieve the best in life.<sup>18</sup> The revelation of God in Christ and the drama of the redemptive act provides the hope for man and the message for the preacher. Confronted with these ingredients the preacher proclaims a saving gospel to a needy world. Is the message to be academic and perhaps attract and engage the mind of the hearer? The

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<sup>17</sup>Kennedy, I Believe, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 66.

ultimate purpose of the sermon is to so preach Christ that the hearer is confronted with the demands of the gospel and that an amendment of life is the result. Kennedy reflects this aim when he suggests in his autobiography:

For me it was to proclaim a conviction about God's nature, God's will, God's resources, God's promises. It was to bear testimony to the truth of Christ and to help people see themselves as the objects of God's love revealed in Jesus. It was to create a faith that the gospel is the answer to all human questions and the solution to all human problems.<sup>19</sup>

The gospel of Christ is not to be considered preached when it has only been spoken by the preacher and pondered by the hearer. There is the further step to be considered and that is the step of decision taken by the hearer to demonstrate the implications of faith in his life. To do this, a verdict must be rendered on the part of the hearer. It is with this in mind that the preacher proclaims with urgency the redemptive love of Christ. Of course such preaching demands the sincere attention of the preacher. He cannot succumb to the sin of harmlessness. As the preacher proclaims the truth of repentance and the judgment of God upon sin, he is necessarily demanding a verdict from those who listen. The supreme event of God acting in Christ is decisive. The invitation offered by the preacher is that all men participate in that divine activity.

It is this dimension in the preaching of Gerald Kennedy that reflects a uniqueness and the mood of urgency. Others may be content to present a lecture, he is concerned with matters that are of eternal

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 136.

value and demand a response on the part of the hearer. Not merely the response of understanding and communication, but the response of decision.

The gospel comes like a telegram with all the excitement of a Word that must not be delayed. Once this finds us, we shall not be in our pulpits on Sunday as lecturers to discuss some academic subject. But we shall see ourselves as God's messengers proclaiming to each man that God has acted and is acting for him, and invites every person to share in that divine activity. In the words of John Wesley, salvation is for those 'who are ready for the conflict, and desire help, and are not inactive.'<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. THIS NORM APPLIED TO REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS

##### A. A General Statement

In a written discourse it is impossible to completely evaluate the scope of a sermon. The difficulty is based on the difference between hearing a sermon preached and reading a sermon. There is the dimension of communication that goes beyond words and ideas that are in print. A sermon that may be dynamic and effective when read, may lose its communication when preached by the writer. The reverse is also possible. A sermon that is preached with obvious communication, may lose its dynamic when the personality of the preacher is removed. There are many intangibles to effective communication; the appearance of the preacher, knowledge of his background and possible accomplishments, his educational qualifications, social and political currents in which he may be involved, and even the environment and atmosphere at the time of

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<sup>20</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 60.

preaching. These are but a few of the intangibles that affect communication. Yet, in evaluating a written sermon, these factors have limited influence.

This broad principle is especially evident in regard to the norm of urgency. Urgency is not so much a word or sentence as it is a mood or a spirit. The preacher does not say, "Pay attention now, for I am being urgent." He exudes a spirit of concern and seriousness about the sermon that gets inside the minds and hearts of the hearers. In this regard, Bishop Gerald Kennedy is a model of extreme urgency. Every sermon is of utmost importance to him. His demeanor before, during, and after the sermon reflects a seriousness about preaching that captivates the attention of the hearer. His own words are, "So far as I can recall, I have never stood in my pulpit without having prepared for the event to the very best of my ability."<sup>21</sup>

The sermons to be evaluated are: "Patches On Old Cloth", "Logic and Life," and "I Will Not Come Down". The first one is from his book, The Parables, the second one is from The Lion and the Lamb, and the third sermon is one that Bishop Kennedy has recorded for the Word Record Company. Copies of the manuscripts are included in the Appendix.

#### B. "Patches On Old Cloth"

This sermon is based on Matthew 9:16; "And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the

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<sup>21</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 136.

garment, and a worse tear is made." After a few brief sentences of background and contextual information, Kennedy brings the biblical truth to bear upon the immediate situation. His concern is how the Scripture is to be related to the needs of modern man. The norm of urgency is reflected in the absence of generalities and specific suggestions as to the application of the biblical truth under discussion. The first major idea that he posits deals with "the obvious reflection that we prefer the old and the familiar."<sup>22</sup> To substantiate this claim he becomes specific by using examples of this from the realms of history, government, and the church. He draws his basic thought as an inference from the text, he relates it to the needs and thought patterns of modern man.

Kennedy's evaluation of the plight of man is a recurring theme in his sermons. As suggested previously, when the preacher evaluates humanity as being in desperate need, then he urgently addresses himself to that need. Within this sermon he suggests man's nature as wanting to hold on to the past. Man, for personal security, is hesitant to step forward and change; or, he is reluctant to accept the demands that a moving culture places upon him. "An inordinate affection for the old will find us hanging on to the past too long."<sup>23</sup>

He further describes man's dilemma as being such that he is unable to "patch" the garment of his living. The past does not have the

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<sup>22</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Parables (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 54.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

answers to modern problems--as man has understood that past. "This new era has political, economic, and social implications which overwhelm our imaginations. To patch up our ideas of sovereignty, the waging of war, and international relations is utterly futile."<sup>24</sup> The same futility is brought into the domestic scene. Whether it has to do with teen age problems or marital problems, man's tendency is to rely on the answers of the past to solve the dilemmas of the present.

It is against such an evaluation of human nature that Kennedy suggests the adequacy of the Christian faith. It is in the concluding paragraphs that he brings to bear upon the reader the power of the Gospel of Christ. "Let us note that Christ unites the old and the new. He brings into men's lives and their societies the proper balance between the old garments which sometimes have to be patched and the new garments which we must be ready to put on."<sup>25</sup> At least seventy-five percent of the sermon has been spent in describing man's dilemma and seasoning the situation with Christian moralisms. A typical example of this is:

Life demands that men shall have adventurous minds. No man is at home in this world who decides to stop at some point and travel no farther. For the best picture of our life is a journey and we must remain always as men who expect to see strange and wonderful sights ahead. Not the least of the gifts of Christ is this welcoming of the future with great expectations.<sup>26</sup>

Bishop Kennedy is an eloquent advocate of the Christian philosophy of life. In it he finds the remedy for the needs of man. It affects his attitude toward himself and his environment. It is this pervasive

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 60

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

spirit of Christianity that is preached in the early part of the sermon.

A unique quality of urgency that is reflected in this sermon is found in the subtle demand for decision on the part of the reader. A constant demand is made for a decision that involves an amendment of life. This is done by presenting contrasts before the mind. Two ways of living are given. The difference between them demands that a choice be made by the reader. The Christian message and the Christ of that message are presented as the answers for man. "The Gospel which is the same since the beginning also promises to make all things new. I do not know anything like Christianity to help a man or a generation respect the past and welcome the future."<sup>27</sup> Following this with an appropriate illustration, Kennedy then involves all readers in a moment of decision with the words, "Can you imagine what it meant for that boy to wear something new for the first time?"<sup>28</sup> In those moments of imagination, the reader is confronted with the possibility of a new way of life in Christ. He is confronted with decision. This reflects the sense of urgency that has undergirded the motivation of the preacher.

#### C. "Logic and Life"

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes."<sup>29</sup> With these words printed at the heading of the sermon, Bishop Kennedy proceeds in developing the first of his

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>29</sup>Luke 10:21.

sermons that give the paradoxes of the Christian faith. The text becomes the springboard from which he presents the proposition that the wise and understanding of this world are unable to give an adequate philosophy to meet man's deepest needs. But Christianity has the answer. While it may appear to be contrary to logic, "what a devastating thing it is to our intellectual limitations."<sup>30</sup>

Man's dilemma is given as descriptive of Thoreau's words, "quiet desperation."<sup>31</sup> Man is preoccupied with having a philosophy of life and this is indicative that he has not found an adequate one. He accepts no values that are beyond his immediate comprehension and external manipulation. Man is constantly going wrong because he assumes that "men are purely rational creatures who act only from rational motives. We think that the healing of the ills of our life is an intellectual matter."<sup>32</sup> Man is further described as being paradoxical within himself. He is both free and bound; a spirit and yet a body. This results in a continual warfare within. In spite of wanting to be free, he remains a slave. What is the answer to his dilemma? "Of one we can be sure—it will have to be a way beyond logic."<sup>33</sup>

It is to this dilemma and analysis of man's nature that Kennedy addresses the Christian answer. The sermon abounds in moralisms that reflect the Christian way of life. "There is meaning in life. It has a purpose. There are principles underlying the world, and a mighty

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<sup>30</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Lion and The Lamb (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 21.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

order is discernible."<sup>34</sup> In writing of the virtue of mercy and equating it with justice, he says:

Gentleness is a Christian virtue. But it is an austere kind of gentleness, which to some minds is illogical and therefore impossible. It has been the great accomplishment of the gospel to hold our understanding of the gentleness of God's commands over against the severity of his purposes. Men must do the same thing in their personal relations. Christian graces must rest on ethical virtues. No single virtue can stand alone.<sup>35</sup>

In many ways this sermon is typical of many of Bishop Kennedy's sermons. The content rests not so much on the proclamation of Jesus Christ, as the preaching of the adequacy of the Christian way of life.

The spirit of urgency is indicated by his confronting of the reader with the demand of decision. He urges the reader to remember that Jesus called men to be his followers. The Christian message makes its appeal to mankind. "To men as they stand at the crossroads it comes, not with a system, but with a revelation. It demands a plunge, a decision, an action."<sup>36</sup>

#### D. "I Will Not Come Down"

The Scripture background for this sermon is taken from the Book of Nehemiah. "And I sent messengers unto them saying, 'I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down'."<sup>37</sup> This sermon is considered because it deals with an area of concern that Bishop Kennedy often speaks about--the ministry. It appeals primarily to a select group but

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>37</sup>Nehemiah 6:3.

distinct patterns of approach are evident and they parallel the patterns that he uses in other sermons. The sense of specific immediacy is easily recognized. The Scripture passage is described as having meaning to modern man, "Now I don't know how you feel about it today, but it seems to me that word is spoken to us."<sup>38</sup>

Since the sermon is directed primarily to the ministers and the church, the needs illuminated are those prevalent in the church. He intimates that often the church people are like those in Nehemiah's day--discouraged and believing that nothing can be done. He also sees the church as harboring those who engage in malicious whispering campaigns. The minister is not to be disturbed at such signs, in spite of their prevalence. In depicting those who would bring pressure to bear upon the modern "Nehemiah", he categorizes them: trouble makers, the discouragers, the fearful, and the scandal-mongers. The preacher is also warned of his susceptibility to temptation. "You will be tempted to go down, but don't do it ... I really don't know anything much harder to bear than to bear lies about you."<sup>39</sup> It is to this need in the lives of men and women that he addresses the message of Christianity. This sermon has overtones of urgency that are not present in the other sermons under discussion. This is true, probably because the manuscript is not edited and it contains many words of urgency and phrases that are repeated to insure proper emphasis.

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<sup>38</sup>Gerald Kennedy, Sermon: "I Will Not Come Down", Record W-3245-LP, Side 2, Word Record Company.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

Several times the word "Oh" is used and it carries with it a quality of concern for those who are listening. An example of the intensity of spirit that he reflects and the use of repetition in his urgency is sensed in the words; "I have learned that just as there's no sense in coming down from the wall to talk to these people, there's no sense in writing a latter in answer to them either. Let it go-- let it go--and be caught up in this vision, this hope, this great project."<sup>40</sup>

This sermon reflects very little of the urgency that comes with the proclamation of the Gospel. Mainly, this is so because of the absence of the Gospel of Christ. In fact, the word "Christ" is used only twice in the entire sermon and in both cases it refers to the church as being the body or fellowship of Christ. This is not to say that the Christian dimension is absent; in fact, the basis of the constant moralistic emphasis has its tradition in the Christian faith. The sermon is primarily motivational rather than proclamation. With the stress on moralism and ethics, he is seeking to motivate the ministry and the laity to a deeper understanding of the task of the church.

We'd better do it in the Church. Better come back to the understanding of what the Church is--the dignity of its calling and the divinity of its life and the meaning of its fellowship--build some walls--make it more than a club--that men who come to us understand that here--here is the fellowship of men in Christ--here is love--here is redemption .... We need in our lives the Holy of Holies which was in the temple of Jerusalem where nobody enters except the high priests and only on stated occasions because that's where God was.<sup>41</sup>

The appeal for an amendment of life and a decision on the part

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

of the hearer is again evident. Kennedy is preaching for a verdict. With every means of content and delivery he is preaching with a sense of passion for those who are listening. It is his commission to be a channel through which the spirit of God can work. He does not leave the reader or listener up-in-the-air as to what his decision ought to be. He spells it out and then challenges the audience to a decision.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SIMPLICITY OF STYLE IN THE PREACHING OF BISHOP GERALD KENNEDY

#### I. THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURE

The need for simplicity is reflected in the structure of the sermon. Some would disdain any kind of rules for structuring a sermon, but the need is apparent if the preacher is to define his message and present it in simple terms. Structure lends itself to the motif of simplicity. "The thing that is most distressing to me in listening to sermons or in reading them, is the vast number of preachers who have not learned how to make the most simple outline. More sermons crack up on this hidden reef of inadequate organization than on any other rock."<sup>1</sup> Many men are excellent conversationalists but unless the sermon has a skeleton on which to build ideas, the discourse will degenerate into a rambling muddle. It is not necessary to have the outline obvious, but it should be there in strong terms, so as to give the hearer a sense of direction and purpose. The generally accepted pattern for outlining is to move from the general to the particular. In this manner the hearer is confronted by the demand of personal response as the preacher concludes his sermon. In this method the outline should be kept simple and used in a way that the hearer or reader can tell the relation of

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 48.

each thought to the whole.

Kennedy has related the need for a simple structure to that of debating:

I think the most valuable early training any young preacher can have is debating. I would make that a required part of pre-theological courses for several reasons. For one thing, it teaches one to speak for a verdict, or a decision. It demands such careful preparation that the debater is ready to answer any possible arguments that may be advanced by his opponents. But most important of all, it teaches one how to organize his material by making a brief. Then it is that one learns to make an affirmation and build a foundation for it that will hold it up. The process is one of saying that this is true, because this is true, because this is true. The whole thing has to hang together and develop logically, and in my judgment that is the minimum requirement for building a sermon.<sup>2</sup>

Kennedy places the matter of organizing or outlining the sermon as a major cause for the lack of communication between pulpit and pew. The clarity of the sermon, to a great extent, is determined by the simplicity in organization of the material to be given. The lack of this quality gives the people a vagueness about the sermon subject and an uncertainty in their role of response. "To organize our material does not take special gifts and it does not demand any great intelligence. But it does demand the assumption that an involved and obscure style is not so much a sign of profundity of thought as of confusion of mind."<sup>3</sup> While this style of preaching may on the surface appear intellectual it is often little more than ambiguity of thought.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

## II. THE USE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

While a trademark for the Kennedy style of preaching has long been the use of illustrations, he seldom mentions this in his writings. He published two "Notebooks" which are the compilation of illustrations in which he shows a keen interest in types and sources for illustrations. In his book, His Word Through Preaching, he spends less than two pages speaking of the place of the illustration. This does not mean that he places little emphasis on its importance. In response to his statement that, "Abstract preaching is always bad preaching,"<sup>4</sup> he declares that it is through the use of illustrations that preaching is made concrete. To avoid the pitfalls of too many or too few illustrations, his normal pattern of usage is to use at least one illustration for every major proposition. Through reading and from personal experience, the preacher has a continual source for apropos illustrations. The preacher should always be aware of the danger of using too many trite or threadbare illustrations.

The example that the preacher should follow in the use of illustrations is Jesus.

Our best models will be the parables of Jesus for in them we see how a great preacher makes unforgettable and unescapable a mighty truth. They were brief, with only one point, and they throw a light on a great idea. They made an abstraction like 'God is love' find a man's spirit with wonder and power, like a miracle.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Gerald H. Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963) p. 139.

<sup>5</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 145.

From this, the basic thrust of his use of illustrations is seen. They are not for ornament or simply to fill space. The illustrations convey and illuminate the truth that is being declared. In an interview with Bishop Kennedy he accepted the observation that his illustrations have the quality about them of emotionalizing the truth. They are not a paraphrase of previous abstractions. They involve the hearer emotionally in concrete ways.<sup>6</sup>

The source for his illustrations ranges from the theater to the Sports Illustrated, from his own experience to that of fellow ministers. His reading is done primarily for the discovery of appropriate illustrations. In a survey of his sermon, "Who Speaks For Freedom," in his book, Who Speaks For God, a fairly typical range of illustrations may be found. Included among them are the following items:

1. A quotation from the Indian philosopher, Radhakrishnan.
2. A quotation from Spinoza.
3. A historical incident from the Book of Judges.
4. A comparison with the Communist approach to life.
5. Observation about Edwin McNeill Poteat.
6. Two incidents told him by personal friends.
7. Use of Mussolini.
8. Quotation from Michael Faraday.
9. Comment from the Witness by Whittaker Chambers.
10. Observation from G. K. Chesterton.

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<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Gerald H. Kennedy, Appendix E.

11. Two incidents about sporting events.
12. Quotation from Oliver Wendell Holmes.
13. Two historical events.
14. Illustration from his personal experience.<sup>7</sup>

The strength of the illustrations is not that they are numerous or lengthy, but that he uses them artfully to bear the weight of his ideas and argument. Each one seems to be chosen for that particular place where it is used. His illustrations seem to have a double-pronged purpose; to illustrate the basic idea that is being presented and then to carry an idea within themselves. His illustration can stand alone.

It is apparent from the list of illustrations given, that an item of concern in his use of them, is the rejection of plagiarism. He gives credit whenever possible to the source of his thoughts. His conscientious attitude toward the rights of others demands that he resist the temptation to plagiarize. An adjunct to this is that in using another man's ideas, the preacher must be as faithful in relating as possible.

We should use another man's material in such a way that if we knew he was listening to us, we would not be embarrassed. Anything less than this is not enough, and anything more than this is not necessary.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Gerald H. Kennedy, Who Speaks For God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 72-105.

<sup>8</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 122.

### III. THE PLACE OF BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Bishop Gerald Kennedy is a man of one book in the sense that it has been the object of his study and the source of his inspiration throughout his ministry. Beyond the demands of administration and preaching obligations he finds time to be current in the field of Biblical studies. He constantly seeks from those in the field of exegesis, suggestions as to new books that have been written. This interest and concern for Biblical interpretation is further seen in the fact that his seminary and doctoral theses were written in the area of the New Testament. He is in no way to be seen as a literalist in his use of the Bible, however, he does revere and respect it. In his book, God's Good News, he said, "Biblical criticism has been one of the most rewarding of modern studies. It has made the Bible a new book for us and has opened to us meanings which previously were hidden."<sup>9</sup> The Bible must not be taken as an end to itself and worshipped. It is the witness to what God has done in Jesus Christ. In a pamphlet sermon entitled "The Right Book" he makes this observation that reveals the Bible's priority for him. "The book is first of all a record of God's dealing with men and what happened when they fled from Him or accepted Him. It is a book of the spirit, describing the human situation and the reality of God. It is the eternal Book dealing with the great human and divine issues."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Gerald Kennedy, God's Good News (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Gerald H. Kennedy, "The Right Book" Pamphlet sermon.

In evaluating the place of the Bible in his preaching there are two emphases that are prominent. First, his sermons are biblically oriented, in that his basic thesis is based on a Scripture passage. In a sermon to laymen in 1964 he introduced his message with the humorous statement that he always began with Scripture. The reason being that regardless of where he came out in the sermon, he knew that he had a good beginning.<sup>11</sup> Although this was spoken with humor, it does reflect a serious intent on his part. He has a penchant against sermons that degenerate into sociological or psychological lectures. The second emphasis is the usage of Scripture narratives to provide a spring-board for his ideas. He presents the Biblical account and then seems to back off to get a clearer perspective of it. From that vantage point he proceeds to draw certain inferences from the text. His method is not topical or exposition. In the language of homiletics, it would be called, textual-inferential.

Perhaps a clear picture of his use and understanding of the Bible for his preaching can best be seen in his answer to a related question in a personal interview.

Well, I think that a man is bound to be honest in his use of Scripture in-so-far as he can determine what the book says, what the circumstances were. He should not go against that in any way. On the other hand, I think that the Bible is only used properly when it becomes the Word, the living Word, for our particular time, our particular situation. I don't have the feeling that Biblical preaching is really what it ought to be by just retelling an ancient story. I think if it doesn't have some word to speak to us, some

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<sup>11</sup>Lecture by Gerald Kennedy, Bishop's Luncheon, Statler-Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, California, Nov. 5, 1964.

significance in this particular situation, some interpretation for us, it is not much value. So I trust that I don't go against the spirit of it. Sometimes I expect I would take some liberties in saying, 'He might have had this in mind', or 'this is back of this, this is the general field in which we are'. I don't get excited as I once used to get about making sure that I know exactly who the author was and when it was written. I wouldn't have any hesitation, for example, when speaking of St. Paul's letter to the Colossians or to the Ephesians. I wouldn't think it was necessary for me to give a long talk in the middle of the sermon why he didn't write it or maybe it is a later development. Now, maybe that's a carelessness that has come on me with age, but it never seemed to me to be relevant anymore. I don't think people care too much about it. I do have a feeling that the Scriptures represent a world in view, a kind of atmosphere in which is, God rules. Now that's the kind of Biblical preaching I think we must be very careful to be in--that atmosphere of the Scriptures. This is what I try to do, although I am sure that some people would say that I don't succeed in it. Biblical preaching seems to me to be called such when it takes the fundamental assumptions of the Bible and uses them in interpreting our life. You will nearly always find a text or a chapter or a book or an incident from which you can take off, to start with, to get into it. If you are still true to that world which was created for us by the Scripture, you are a Biblical preacher.<sup>12</sup>

#### IV. STYLE OF DELIVERY

In describing the preaching style of Bishop Gerald Kennedy it is necessary to begin where he does--in the study. It is there that he begins the arduous task of preparing a sermon for delivery. The normal procedure is for him to outline the sermon on Wednesday and then talk it through for the next three days. It is the talking of the sermon through that enables him to grasp the ideas with facility and to preach with liberty. It is only with this preparation for delivery that enables him to say, "So far as I can recall, I have never stood in my pulpit without having prepared for the event to the very best of my

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<sup>12</sup>Personal interview with Gerald . . Kennedy, Appendix E.

ability."<sup>13</sup> While other activities may have been slighted in performance, the sermon and its preparation for delivery has had priority in Kennedy's time.

In the delivery of the sermon there is a constant striving to do it as effortlessly as possible. This does not infer a lack of interest or intensity. "I can't imagine just a kind of easy-going talking in preaching. It is intense, or should be. If it has taken hold of you, if it's exciting to you, then you are at pains to make sure that people who hear you, get it."<sup>14</sup> It should be apparent to the listener that the preacher delivers with ease. As with all true artists and craftsmen, the preacher is effective when the mechanics of preaching are unnoticeable.

Bishop Kennedy is an advocate of the use of the simple and natural gesture. He does not condone the old time oratorical approach that relied on a maximum of motion and noise to the exclusion of thought and persuasion. The ministerial tone with its sepulchral overtones has no place in the modern pulpit. The natural use of the voice is always effective in capturing the ear of the audience. There was a time when the preacher was the only capable speaker in the area but this is no longer true. Education and the use of communication media has raised the standard for effective speaking as well as the number of persons who are capable public speakers.

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<sup>13</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 136.

<sup>14</sup>Personal interview with Gerald Kennedy, Appendix E.

A vital aspect in the delivery of sermons is what Kennedy refers to as the "dramatic." The preacher, in his delivery, must be aware of the need for this without going to the extreme. "The drama of a sermon ought not to be any antics on the part of the preacher or in any particular way of putting it, but in the material itself."<sup>15</sup> The result of such an emphasis is what has been called "animated conversation." Kennedy is a classic example of this kind of delivery. This allows for a smooth delivery and yet provides for an intensity of spirit to grip the preacher and the congregation.

The style of delivery that is encouraged by Kennedy includes the right use of the voice. He suggests that the manner of speaking should be varied constantly, as any prolonged pitch or manner of speaking becomes tiresome to the listener.

There are times when the elevated thoughts demand a ringing voice, and there are moments when a man must speak quietly and at a slower tempo. No mood should be maintained for too long, and a good sermon will be delivered in a variety of moods. There is no harm in laughter as long as it is thoughtful laughter. The preacher with a good sense of humor ought to use it in the pulpit, though always with restraint. The Gospel becomes drab when it is delivered in a drab tone.<sup>16</sup>

It is imperative that the preacher use good enunciation in his speaking. The preacher can easily get in the habit of slurring words and failing to pronounce certain consonants. This can contribute to making a delivery crude and uncultured.

A vital part of delivery is that which involves the physical

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<sup>15</sup>Personal interview with Gerald Kennedy, Appendix E.

<sup>16</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 71.

assets of the preacher. His personality permeates the entire sermon. This is an elusive quality but positive in its presence. The projection of his personality attracts the attention of the hearer and injects in the sermon a unique quality. A part of this includes the physical habits that the deliverer uses. Many of the movements of the body can take on the character of annoyance and it is up to the preacher to eliminate them as quickly as possible. They can become barriers to effective communication. "Most of us fail to realize the extent to which we preach with our bodies. The actor makes no such mistake and assumes from the beginning that he must learn how to control not only his voice but his arms and legs."<sup>17</sup> The proper posture for the preacher is to stand erect and to use the arms only in meaningful gestures. "A preacher ought to be able to stand before people and give the impression of perfect control over his whole body, or better yet, to give the impression that every muscle is the servant of the message."<sup>18</sup>

## V. THIS NORM APPLIED TO REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS

### A. "Patches On Old Cloth"

A trademark of a sermon preached or written by Bishop Kennedy is simplicity. The simplicity of sermon structure is probably due to two reasons: 1) it is easier to keep in mind for himself, since he preaches without notes or a manuscript; and, 2) a simple outline enables the

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<sup>17</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

congregation to follow him and it enables them to evaluate the progression of his argument. In this particular sermon he begins with an illustration that quickly engages the mind of the hearer. Within this illustration he places a general proposition that he will later develop in particular ways. The proposition is, "For the idea of change is something we must live with but something few of us learn to accept gracefully."<sup>19</sup> This thesis is then related to the parable that Jesus told concerning new patches on old cloth. Following the introduction, Kennedy posits his first point in the form of an observation: "We might begin with the obvious reflection that we prefer the old and the familiar."<sup>20</sup> The subpoints of this division are made up of particular ways in which mankind does prefer the old to the new. This is viewed in relation to history, religion, government, and the church. The second division of thought says, "Jesus was describing in this story a law of life."<sup>21</sup> By this is meant that there are times when the old cannot be patched. A new garment is needed if growth is to continue. This idea is substantiated from present world conditions, religious experience, and various domestic crises. The third division of the sermon presents the idea that, "This law puts a demand on human nature."<sup>22</sup> Again, application of this truth is made to practical situations. This applies to man's spiritual life, the church, and life in general. The fourth idea suggested from this parable is, "let us note that Christ

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<sup>19</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Parables (New York: Harper and Brothers), p. 53.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

unites the old and the new."<sup>23</sup> Christ is advocated as the answer to the dilemma in which man finds himself. This is followed with the conclusion that involves a decision on the part of the reader.

From this analysis it is clear that Kennedy does give a concise outline. He moves from a general proposition to the specific analysis of that proposition. The movement of thought is always toward the end of the sermon, where the hearer or reader is challenged to involvement. In this particular sermon the adequacy of Christ as a mediator between the old and the new has a prominent place in his thought.

Kennedy's sermons can almost be classified as a source book for illustrations. Within the framework of this one sermon, he includes the following illustrations:

1. An introductory illustration of a man who worried when he had to buy something new
2. A personal illustration about his radio speaking experience.
3. A view of Arnold Toynbee's on the nature of human society.
4. Four illustrations from early American history.
5. The use of an Old Testament passage about Israel.
6. An illustration about children during the blitz in World War II.
7. An idea given by a Greek philosopher.
8. An illustration about the Eastern Orthodox Church.
9. A story about an Arab.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

10. An account from The New York Times.
11. An illustration about Professor Arthur Holly Compton.
12. Statements about Columbus and the launching of Sputnik.
13. An account of his own teen age years.
14. An illustration about the 1925 Rose Bowl game.
15. An illustration about a minister's family in Arizona.
16. An account about John Wesley.
17. A personal experience with Kagawa.
18. An illustration about a sign in New York City.
19. A story about a college girl.
20. A closing illustration depicting the plight of a boy from a city slum area.

A normal reaction to such an array of illustrative material in a thirty minute sermon is a questioning one. Why does Bishop Kennedy use so many illustrations? The answer is predicated on his compulsion to avoid abstractness in his preaching. To do this he uses the method of illustrating ideas. His concepts are brought into the concrete by practical examples. This penchant to be understood is based on the assumption that truth is not any less meaningful if it can be understood. His use of illustrations can be compared to a musical composition where the composer has given a theme with variations. Bishop Kennedy presents his thought as the theme, and then he proceeds to give variations on that theme through illustrations. A further answer to the question as to the number of illustrations has to do with the facility of thought. Kennedy is motivated to make his sermons interest-

ing as well as understandable. Truth can be presented in a cumbersome way. He seeks to avoid this at all costs. It is through the medium of illustrations that his sermons maintain interest and movement. These qualities are especially adapted to this particular sermon, but it is a characteristic of all his sermons.

In analyzing his use of illustrations there are several criteria that are apparent.

1. Illustrations are used from a wide range of sources. In doing this he appeals to more than a limited group. It is quite natural for the hearer to listen more carefully if an example is presented from the world in which he spends most of his time. The illustrations from this sermon appeal to the historian, parents and children, members of other denominations, sportsman, teenagers, scientists, philosophers, college students, those interested in geography, and those interested in Methodism. This range of subjects contributes to the effectiveness of his communication.

2. While humor is not a dominant characteristic of his preaching, Kennedy never fails to inject a bit of humor into his sermon. This is most often done through the use of an illustration. In this sermon, he said, "There is a story about an Arab who felt hungry one night, lighted a candle, and opened a date. It was wormy and he threw it aside. He tried another and it had worms, and so did the third. Whereupon he blew out the candle and ate the fourth."<sup>24</sup> The humor of

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

the incident is obvious, but two important by-products resulted. The reader's interest is maintained and the illustration became the vehicle of truth, "Rather than face unpleasant realities, we often find it easier to stay with things as they are and hope for the best."<sup>25</sup>

3. Kennedy is adverse to the lengthy illustration. Very seldom does he use an illustration that is more than six or seven lines in length or a matter of seconds in duration. To support his concept that the Christian believes in the movement of life, he merely says, "One of the Greek philosophers thought the process of life could best be summed up as a constant flux."<sup>26</sup> The length of the illustration is also shortened because he does not introduce it, but merely injects it in to the movement of thought. The illustration carries the weight of the thought he seeks to illuminate, and a further paraphrase is unnecessary. He does not question the intelligence of his audience by explaining the illustration.

4. Kennedy not only uses his illustrations to involve the reader or hearer in the thought patterns of the sermon, but he also uses them to involve the emotions. He wants the congregation to feel what is being said as well as to understand what is being said. The truth is emotionalized by the use of illustrations that grip the feelings. In this way a person is motivated toward a decision of action and interest. An example of this is the concluding illustration of this sermon. The emotional content of the account as well as the reaction it

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

arouses is obvious.

There was a social worker assigned to distribute used clothing at a center in a city slum. A mother brought her twelve-year-old son in to get him an overcoat for the cold winter. The boy was sullen and perhaps embarrassed. The social worker, in looking through the pile of clothing found a boy's coat that seemed entirely new with no sign of wear. Some rich family, perhaps, had put it aside and forgotten about it. "Son," said the man, "try this on." The boy put it on slowly and then began to touch it and look at it. His eyes grew wide with excitement. "Why," he gasped, "it's new!"<sup>27</sup>

Kennedy's simplicity is further revealed in his approach to and use of biblical exegesis. With his educational background and research work in the field of biblical thought, it is difficult to imagine that he is unacquainted with the techniques of exegesis. It can rather be assumed that he ignores this dimension of preaching for a more practical purpose. His sermons cannot be described as biblical in the current understanding of that word. However, accepting his own definition of biblical preaching, he does remain within the broad outlines of that definition.<sup>28</sup> Very seldom does he give an exegesis that would demand technical knowledge to be understood. His usual reference to the Scripture text is little more than a salute. It acts as a springboard from which he can lift the ideas and inferential concepts he desires to project. Many of his sermons come from a narrative account. From this incident he will draw certain relevant assumptions. The biblical exegesis for all purposes is seldom presented.

In this sermon he follows this general approach. The biblical

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>28</sup>Page 93, footnote 12 in this thesis.

record is given in this concise way:

There are two brief parables which deal with this theme. One tells about the uselessness of sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth on the old garment; for when the garment is washed, the patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth. The other speaks of what happens when you put new wine into old wineskins; it is necessary, Jesus says, to put new wine into new wineskins.<sup>29</sup>

From this contextual report he then proceeds to develop the theme that the parables suggest. The research and diligence with which Kennedy approached each parable is reflected in the preface of his book,

The Parables. "The reader will not find here a critical treatment of the parables, though I spent considerable time studying what the scholars say. But I have tried to find their message for our day."<sup>30</sup>

Evidence of his view toward the parables is found in his use of them as guides in the use of illustrations. In speaking of them he says, "They were brief, with only one point, and they threw light on a great idea."<sup>31</sup> His approach to the parables is to find what they mean and then reflect that upon the problems of today. This does not do violence to the work of Joachim Jeremias, in his book, The Parables of Jesus.

What we have to deal with is a conception which is essentially simple but involves far-reaching consequences. It is that the parables of Jesus are not--at any rate primarily--literary productions, nor is it their object to lay down general maxims . . . , but each of them was uttered in an actual situation of the life of Jesus, at a particular and often unforeseen point. Moreover, as we shall see, they were preponderantly concerned with a situation of conflict. They correct, reprove, attack. For the greater part, though not exclusively, the parables are weapons of warfare. Every-

<sup>29</sup>Kennedy, The Parables, p. 54.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

<sup>31</sup>Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching, p. 145.

one of them calls for immediate response.<sup>32</sup>

A further obvious source that Kennedy uses is George A. Buttrick. In his book, The Parables of Jesus, are found many of the source ideas that Kennedy uses in his sermons. The view of Buttrick regarding the interpretations of parables is firmly espoused by Kennedy. Buttrick says, "a wise interpretation of a parable will seek its salient truth. A parable is not an allegory. It is a flash of light, not an ingeniously devised mosaic. It may have divergent rays, but these derive their virtue from the light itself."<sup>33</sup>

#### B. "Logic and Life"

In this first sermon in The Lion and The Lamb Kennedy sets the pattern for succeeding sermons. He suggests several possible truths as being paradoxes of the Christian faith. His basic theme or proposition can best be described in these words, "We cannot believe that any value is beyond our external manipulations."<sup>34</sup> In this regard man is preoccupied about a philosophy of life. He seeks by the power of his own intellect for answers to the meaning of life. The ultimate direction of the sermon is to declare that the Christian answer transcends man's logic. In the Introduction of the sermon, Kennedy suggests

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<sup>32</sup> Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1962), p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> George A. Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1928), p. xxiv.

<sup>34</sup> Gerald H. Kennedy, The Lion and The Lamb (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 13.

possible ways in which man is seeking for a workable way of life. In seeking support for his philosophy, man is motivated by scientific presuppositions. The first main point in the sermon is called, "Desire for philosophy."<sup>35</sup> This thought is substantiated by the questing spirit of youth. While this may be natural, the contention of Kennedy is that philosophy alone is inadequate. "We go wrong in all of this because we assume that men are purely rational creatures who act only from rational motives."<sup>36</sup> With this thought, he makes a transition into the second main division. This point is called, "The Inadequacies of Philosophy."<sup>37</sup> This view is further substantiated by the thoughts that philosophy has no complete answer because each man has but a partial grasp of truth. Then, there is the disturbing fact that as one attempts to regulate life, "There is a kind of defiance for our reason which is also a part of life."<sup>38</sup> This point is reinforced by examples from geology and history. Philosophy is further proven inadequate because of its relativity. It is so often determined by a man's temperament. "Every philosophy, being a human affair, has to be confronted with the question of what person it is to be applied to and when and where."<sup>39</sup> The third point of the sermon is called, "Life is paradox."<sup>40</sup> Logic will not admit to this possibility, and yet man is a paradox. This contention is defended by Kennedy by examples from psychology, physics, sociology, and the Bible. While reason and logic would rebel at the

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

acceptance of life being paradoxical, the Christian faith readily admits it. In this way Kennedy begins to show the strength of the Christian faith over against rationalism. The final point of the sermon is called, "The Gospel above logic."<sup>41</sup> Christianity in many respects seems contrary to man's reason. Kennedy gives examples of this: it is man's heart more than his head that finds God; if he wants to get, he must give; if he is to win, he must be willing to lose; if he is to live, he must die.<sup>42</sup>

The conclusion of the sermon is an affirmation that declares the assurity of the Christian answer. He is not standing around debating, but rather affirming the reality of his faith.

This sermon also reflects the concern of Bishop Kennedy for concrete preaching. In spite of the theoretical tendency of the sermon, he has attempted to bring the thoughts from the abstract to the concrete through the use of illustrations. Within the pages of this sermon he includes the following illustrations:

1. An example from Thoreau.
2. An incident from the life of Colonel Lawrence.
3. A personal illustration from fraternity life.
4. A quotation from Lancelot Whyte.
5. A story about the construction of a prefabricated house.
6. Two examples from the writings of G. K. Chesterton.
7. An illustration from geology.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

8. An incident from the life of Francis Bacon.
9. A personal illustration.
10. A story about an editor who renounced Communism.
11. The example of Sigmund Freud.
12. An example from physics.
13. A quotation from Isaiah.
14. An illustration from the life of Albert Schweitzer.
15. An account from the life of Henry IV.

The criteria for the use of illustrations is followed in this sermon as well as in the previous one. He draws his examples from a wide range of sources and in this particular sermon his reliance upon the writings of G. K. Chesterton can be noted. In Kennedy's books there is a strong reflection of the influence of Chesterton. The theme of paradoxes has its origin in the writings of Chesterton. It should be noted that many of Kennedy's illustrations are taken from the lives of great men. This historical perspective is the norm rather than the exception. His use of humor is also indicated in this sermon. His double-pronged use of it is also evident.

We are like two Arabs Colonel Lawrence took with him to London. They were entranced by the gadgets of Western civilization. When they were leaving, Lawrence asked them what they would like for a gift. They said they wanted two hot water faucets. They assumed that by turning the handle they might have hot water in the middle of the desert, the same as in a London hotel room.<sup>43</sup>

The pattern for short illustrations is likewise followed. Most of them are short succinct descriptions of incidents or quotations that bring

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

light to the abstractions presented. It is one of Kennedy's unique qualities that he can involve the emotion of his readers and hearers in the truths he preaches. As he builds his sermon to the climax of presenting the validity of Christian faith, the emotional impact is obvious as he throws out the words of Henry IV, addressed to Crillon, "Hang yourself, brave Crillon: we have fought at Arques and you were not there."<sup>44</sup> The Christian has a relationship and a knowledge that goes beyond mere argument. The congregation has become involved with what has been said.

Very little can be said for the exegesis of this sermon. There is none. This is an example of many of Bishop Kennedy's sermons where he has followed the topical approach. While his basic idea is submerged in the opening text to some degree, he has promptly left it to develop his own ideas. The relation between text and sermon is limited if there is one at all.

#### C. "I Will Not Come Down"

This particular sermon is perhaps more typical of Bishop Gerald Kennedy's preaching than either of the other two. The main reason is that he uses a narrative account--he is particularly fond of Old Testament incidents--and draws certain inferences from it. The structure of the sermon begins with the recounting of the story as given in the Book of Nehemiah. The recounting is not literal but is given in

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

paraphrase form. Immediately after repeating the text, he launches into the relation of the story to the present situation, by suggesting his first main point, "Now I don't know how you feel about it today, but it seems to me that word is spoken to us."<sup>45</sup> This thought becomes the theme and Kennedy gives a series of variations of it, taken from his own experiences. The second point deals with the question of who the persons might be who would encourage the Christian to leave the high level of living. He divides the group into four classes: the trouble-makers, the discouragers, the fearful, and the scandle-mongers. The third point is presented in the words, "You will be tempted to go down, but don't do it. This showed the greatness of Nehemiah. You'll be tempted."<sup>46</sup> This theme is developed by showing how the temptation comes to the ministry and to the laity. The main thrust of the argument is that temptation comes by getting both to be side-tracked on secondary issues. The fourth division of the sermon is also an inference from the Nehemiah account. "This word of Nehemiah needs to be in our mind. He says, 'I'm doing a great work.' That helps a lot. 'I'm doing a great work and I know it.' Are you? Am I?"<sup>47</sup> With this introduction he proceeds to relate the matter to the cause of Christ. It is Christ's cause that should be the object of man's concern. The climax of the sermon is in the conclusion. It is here that he motivates the audience to action and decision. He does not recapitulate the structure

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<sup>45</sup>Gerald Kennedy, Sermon: "I Will Not Come Down", Record W-3245-LP, Side 2, Word Record Company, Manuscript p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., P. 5.

of the sermon, but challenges to practical living.

The illustrative material in this sermon is unique to the situation. Since the sermon is directed to the clergy and the Methodist laity, many of the illustrations are taken from Kennedy's association with those groups. Included among the illustrations are:

1. An illustration concerning a personal friend.
2. An incident from his pastorate at Palo Alto.
3. An incident from his counselling ministry.
4. An illustration concerning his dealings with a preacher.
5. An incident from a treasurer's report.
6. A personal experience that occurred in Florida.
7. An incident concerning a Board meeting.
8. An illustration about a member in one of his churches.
9. An incident from his travels in Poland.
10. An illustration concerning extremists in the Conference.
11. An illustration concerning a pioneer flyer, Handley Paige.

This array of illustrations point to the fact of his personal involvement in the sermon. While the source of the illustrations is limited, the areas of concern do have a wider range of interest. He follows his normal pattern of short, pithy illustrations. The element of humor is found in the several incidents of incongruity. One of them concerns an elderly couple who drove to his church from the country. "One Sunday morning, the old gentleman forgot--or ignored, anyway--a stop sign and there was a policeman there and gave him a ticket--on Sunday morning, going to church. Well, the old man was just shocked and

angry. 'Imagine,' he said, 'getting a traffic ticket going to church.' " 48

This sermon provides another example of Kennedy's use of emotionally charged illustrations. From the context of the sermon it appears that extremists have been of concern to the Bishop. From this climate he boldly attacks them with his anti-extremist illustrations. Most of the illustrations are directed at specific groups of people or specific problems. The emotional impact is obvious. The subject matter as well as the illustrative material is geared to involve the feelings of the hearers.

As suggested previously, Kennedy spends little time in presenting the results of exegesis. He assumes the veracity of the historical incident and relates it purely as a basis from which he can draw his moralisms.

The simplicity in style is more apparent in this sermon than the other two. Both "Patches On Old Cloth," and "Logic and Life" were in printed books and were the objects of revision. This sermon was printed from the actual presentation without editorial revisions. The roughness of grammar, and occasional repetitions reflect the spontaneous spirit of it. The record--from which the sermon was transcribed--gives the voice quality and precise pronunciation that is characteristic of Bishop Kennedy. His voice is well modulated and the rate of speed with which he speaks gives ample time for the hearer to follow his thoughts.

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48 Ibid.

While these representative sermons do not attempt to cover the whole range of Bishop Kennedy's sermon style, they do reflect general indications of his concern for simplicity. The type of sermon will constantly vary but he will include within any sermon he preaches, those criteria that have been discussed. The structure will be as simple as possible and will have a continuous movement toward the conclusion. The sermon will be amply buttressed with illustrative material. Besides a basic illustration for every major point, there will also be illustrations for the subpoints. If there is a characteristic word that describes his preaching, it would be "short". He preaches short sermons, he uses short illustrations, short sentences, and short words. Simplicity is a basic pattern for his preaching.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELEVANCE OF THOUGHT AND SEMANTIC IN THE PREACHING OF BISHOP GERALD KENNEDY

#### I. HIS CONCERN FOR RELEVANT LANGUAGE

Concern over the relevance of words is more than a fad for Bishop Gerald Kennedy. Aside from their usage in preaching his concern and understanding of the value of words comes from his interest in literature and writing. "What wonderful things are words! For more than thirty years I have been using them professionally and striving to make myself a better craftsman. To endeavor so to speak that the words will march into the hearts of the hearers is the greatest thrill I know."<sup>1</sup> This is not limited to the speaking of words but also to the writing and reading of them. "The uniqueness of man is established by his ability to speak and to write."<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Kennedy is a man who has associated with books in all phases of his life. To read and allow words to play upon his mind is a constant thrill and his life would be miserable without this association. This respect for words and books is so consuming that he refuses to tear a page from any hardbound book. With this penchant toward words and their meaning, he is dogmatic in his rejection of books that

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

are vague in meaning. He is particularly allergic to much of the language that is used in the classroom. That is not the place to learn language that communicates. It is stilted and tends to the abstract.

Classrooms are the worst places so far as dead language is concerned. The educational experts develop a speech that is fit for no habitation but the cemetery. Any man who gets in a theoretical ivory tower is doomed ultimately to talk like a walking ghost. It is in the market place, the home, at the ball park, the shop, the church, where language is alive. Every man who would speak or write must be with all kinds of real people in all kinds of real situations.<sup>3</sup>

As a guide to the use of language, he suggests a return to the style of the Bible. He does not mean that there is not a need for making it relevant for modern days, but rather a return to the language that spoke with authority. For example the Hebrew thought is projected for the readers in words that are alive. The strong mood of action is seen in the telling, the proclaiming, the announcing. The conciseness that the writers had in telling the story of Joseph in thirteen chapters while Thomas Mann took four volumes, illustrates the type of approach used.

It is in relation to preaching that Kennedy's feelings about words are most often expressed. From the very beginning of his ministry he has been captivated by the ideal of speaking to be understood. The simple, clear, language of the common man is the medium that he has chosen to be the vehicle of his preaching. When preaching to university audiences and in the Lyman Beecher Lectures he refused to change the pattern of his language. The preacher has no right to speak in a

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<sup>3</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 24.

language that is only understood by the initiated. He speaks to all men and constantly strives to make his ideas travel over the simplest of words. He accepts the axiom of semantics that a right word is more powerful than the right argument. "Yet finding it demands a discipline that most preachers are not willing to follow. We are content to approximate when we seek to express our thoughts. Such use of words will seldom move anything."<sup>4</sup>

Two dangers or habits that plague the minister are the overuse of adjectives and the use of slang. Both of these can become barriers to communication and can weaken the impact of the message. The language of verbosity and the gutter is out of place in the pulpit. It is the responsibility of the preacher to be the custodian of good English as well as being the servant of God.

Kennedy takes a degree of pride in his use of simple language. Nothing impresses him more than to hear a child state that he understood the Bishop. There was a time in the past when he was distressed by the criticism of some that his sermons were not intellectual, but this is of little concern to him now. Nothing sums up his attitude toward the relevance of simple language better than the words, "I do not think we understand what we are talking about unless we can say it plainly."<sup>5</sup>

Thus far, in his writings and preaching, the science of meaning

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<sup>4</sup>Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 77.

<sup>5</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 202.

and the current interest in symbols have been of limited interest to Bishop Kennedy. His concern with language has been more the size and simplicity of words than with their symbolic value. By inference, he has suggested that new words as new symbols of thought can be as detrimental to communication as old words. Instead of creating new words to express old ideas, the preacher should redefine those words. "I think some of the old theological words probably have to be re-interpreted for our time, but I find over and over again that they are the only words that say what we have in mind."<sup>6</sup> It has always been a problem for the preacher to explain the meanings of words like redemption, salvation, and incarnation. The need for relevance is in finding modern symbols to explain these words, instead of replacing them with temporary symbols.

## II. RELEVANT ACTION

The danger that is prevalent in much of the current discussion on relevance is that it tends to remain in the theoretical. It is much easier to propound theories and suggest future possibilities than it is to actually engage in relevant action. This is not the case with Bishop Kennedy. Relevance, to him, has about it the mood of the present tense. Predicated on his own personal theological views and his responsibilities as an administrator of The Methodist Church, he is actively engaged in the front-lines of action. The problems of the

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<sup>6</sup>Personal interview with Bishop Gerald Kennedy, Appendix E.

world as well as the church are of interest to him.

Politically, he is a liberal with strong overtones of patriotism. It is probably because of the first label that he has come under fire and has been accused of having Communistic leanings. Such charges have always been refuted, but he still recoils at the tactics of many who engage in similar smear techniques. It may have been his own experience that he had in mind when he said, "It has become the fashion in our time to smear every man who at one period in his life believed that this approach held out hope, even though he may have dropped the whole thing with horror when he saw that the Communist tyranny really meant."<sup>7</sup> Without being bombastic, he has not hesitated to speak out on issues that had political implications. This has been especially true when the rights of men were involved. In 1964 he was among the first of the clergy to publicly take a stand against Proposition 14. Despite the fact that the Proposition carried, he boldly declared his opposition to it. His continuing battle against extremism is one of long standing. The political implications that have been present in recent years have not dimmed his opinions, particularly in regard to the far right. At the Annual Conference in 1963, he boldly issued a statement in direct opposition to the actions of certain groups in spreading malicious propaganda.

While politically vocal, Bishop Kennedy maintains a high degree of patriotism. In comparison with the working of governments in other

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<sup>7</sup>Gerald Kennedy, Who Speaks For God (New York: Abingdon Press 1954), p. 10-26.

lands, he has been quick to voice his acceptance of the democratic process. To be sure, it has had its weakness and times of uncertainty; but, "The long view of American democracy, however, gives us courage for the future . . . The democratic process has vindicated itself and when compared with other ways, it seems to be amply worthy of our faith."<sup>8</sup> Politically, his energies are directed to the goal of making democracy more Christian and to encourage the application of its basic tenets.

The world of education has also consumed much of his interest. Such interest may be based on his strong feelings about the boredom of education. While he places teachers on a pedestal of importance and acknowledges that teaching is exciting, he categorizes much of education as being boring. "Education and teaching is the contrast between Calvin's Institutes and hearing a great preacher, or the difference between reading a blueprint and seeing a temple."<sup>9</sup> He is dogmatic in his rejection of "progressive education" and feels that much of the current problems with juveniles is caused by the principles of it. In 1961 he was appointed by the governor to the California State Board of Education and serving as a member of this Board has given him opportunity to speak out on such controversial subjects as "prayer in public schools", "separation of church and state" and "suggestive literature." His attitude toward the school system as we currently know it has been

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald . Kennedy, The Christian and His America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 172.

succinctly given:

I believe in the American public-school system; and anyone who tries to weaken it or destroy it is, in my judgment, subversive. I am not enthusiastic about parochial schools, and even less so when their proponents try to get their hands in the public till. I want to raise the standards of teaching and I hope for a deeper appreciation of teachers. It is a great and essential profession and to have it harassed by self-appointed champions of narrow orthodoxy should bring every decent American to its support. For what we are going to be tomorrow is being decided in large part by what is going on in the classrooms of our public schools today.<sup>10</sup>

It is probably in the area of social justice that Kennedy has been the most vocal. Even though Proposition 14 had political implications, Kennedy's opposition was based on civil rights. As Bishop of the Los Angeles area he has encouraged such actions as: 1) inner city group ministeries, 2) appointment of negro ministers to white congregations, 3) studies and forums to evaluate minority problems, and 4) support of ministers who take a stand against segregation. On numerous occasions he has said that he would support any minister who became involved with his church because of his support of civil rights.<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Kennedy's interest and support of civil rights is based on his belief in the freedom of all men. Every citizen in America--and throughout the world--has the right to be treated as an end and not as a means. "Every man is equally precious in the eyes of God and He has no patience with our artificial divisions."<sup>12</sup> It is this persuasion

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<sup>10</sup>Kennedy, While I'm On My Feet, p. 176.

<sup>11</sup>Speech by Bishop Kennedy at the Long Beach Ministers Meeting, 1963.

<sup>12</sup>Gerald . . Kennedy, God's Good News (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 85.

and his inherent concern for all men that motivates Kennedy to support the attempts for social justice.

### III. HIS VIEW OF MODERN MAN

Bishop Kennedy's concern for relevance is further realized as he evaluated the dynamics inherent in modern society. While the power structure of The Methodist Church would tend to insulate him from the mundane matters of life, he has continually sought ways to remain in the mainstream of modern thought. His appraisal of society is open to question, but there is little doubt as to his evaluation of it. Whether he is prescribing a remedy for preaching or for a program of the church, he constantly injects his understanding of the world into his analysis. In describing his view of modern man he says:

The affluent society, with its terrifying increase in the mental-illness rate, is far from sure that it is on the right road.

Most people are having a hard time. Talk with a man or woman on a more than casual level, and in all probability you will find a soul whose condition is best described by Thoreau's words, 'quiet desperation.' There is a horrible emptiness within us and a frantic seeking for peace of mind. We are haunted by fear of each other, fear of tomorrow, fear of retirement, fear of the discovery that life means nothing. And there is no class or condition that is free from this sickness.<sup>13</sup>

While not pessimistic over man's dilemma, he maintains a view of man that is realistic. Academic progress and prosperity has not diluted the basic need of God in the life of mankind. It is to this need and evaluation of man that Kennedy directs his sermons.

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<sup>13</sup>Together Magazine, April, 1965, p. 51.

Kennedy is also aware of the dirth of knowledge about the Bible among people who profess to be church members. In an address to ministers and laity in 1964 at the Statler-Hilton Hotel he spoke of this fact. The substance of his thought was that no longer can a minister take for granted that his audience has a background of Bible information. The Bible is seldom read in the home and little time is spent in the church studying it.<sup>14</sup> If the preacher is to communicate the Gospel then he must take it for granted that a large segment of the congregation needs to be told of the context from which the Scriptures is taken. In this connection the United States is almost as biblically illiterate as Russia.

He is also cognizant of the materialistic spirit that plagues modern society. Man has been consumed with the materialistic approach to life to such an extent that he has forgotten his spiritual concerns. The spirit has not only infected that segment of society without the church, but infiltrated the ranks of the church membership as well. A natural result of such an emphasis is described by Kennedy:

This inordinate concern with possessions has led us to depersonalize our society. We begin to think that we can deal with people in terms of bulk rather than in terms of personal relationships. Propoganda takes the place of information, and the very concept of propaganda is depersonalizing. For it implies that men are not to be dealt with as men, but as a mass which can be manipulated and brought to acquiescence by spending enough money to tell enough people the same thing enough times.<sup>15</sup>

This trend naturally falls into the trap of excessive organization.

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<sup>14</sup>Address by Bishop Kennedy at the Bishop's Luncheon, Statler-Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, California, Novemeber 5, 1964.

<sup>15</sup>Kennedy, God's Good News, p. 92.

Man is caught in the snare of the organization power struggle and is in constant danger of being merely a cog in the machine. It is this kind of personalization that Kennedy attacks.

Bishop Kennedy is also intensely aware of the encroachment of the secular spirit upon the church. His fear is that too often the church lends itself to becoming a tool or servant of the secular institutions. The secular age with all of its identifications becomes a constant threat to the integrity of the church. This is clearly revealed in the spirit of relativism. Society is permeated with individuals who are "for the most part open-minded about everything and convinced about nothing."<sup>16</sup> The church is the exponent of the thesis that there are absolute truths. The secular age attacks this view with ever increasing vigor and confidence.

In the main, Kennedy spends a minimum of time in diagnosing the ills that confront man. His own approach is to affirm that the Gospel and vitality of the church is adequate for any need or spirit of mankind, that society might reflect. He does challenge the ministry to be flexible in understanding the people and the times in which he ministers. How is this done?

Out of your own life. I don't know any other way. I preach to myself. What is the word the Bible has for me in this particular situation? . . . If a man reads widely, if he knows people, if he calls on his folks, if he has a little imagination, he will probably find within himself the fundamental question and the fundamental problems of his period and time.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Personal interview with Bishop Gerald Kennedy, Appendix E.

## IV. THIS NORM APPLIED TO REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS

## A. "Patches On Old Cloth"

The use of technical language is conspicuous by its absence from the sermons of Bishop Gerald Kennedy. He seldom engages in the use of psychological, theological, or scientific words in spite of the fact that most people have a limited knowledge of such words. His sermons are also remarkably free from religious words like salvation, redemption, and atonement. Unless he is speaking to a group of ministers he assumes a relative amount of biblical ignorance on the part of the congregation. His approach to them is more an explanation of biblical truths in common language than a rehearsal of the catalog of religious words. Kennedy's language is the language of Main Street or the Super Market. He makes no attempt to change this for specialized audiences.

A basic thrust of his sermons is found in their relevance. The structure, the delivery, the language, and the message, are all geared to communicating in a relevant way with the audience. Kennedy possesses an indefinable quality that enables him to "read" a situation and be relevant to the needs of the hour. His ability to be aware of the time, place and audience is an innate quality that transcends the confines of a printed sermon.

This sermon was preached at an Annual Conference, and while directed specifically to a specialized audience, its appeal is much broader. The very theme or basic proposition is an appeal to relevance. Kennedy is contending that change is necessary. The individual and the

church must constantly seek to be relevant. "The Church often finds it difficult to believe that old ways demand some revision."<sup>18</sup> His analysis of society is that change is a needed ingredient. There is a constant flux in the cultural patterns of any society. This precipitates a need for a radical outlook on world conditions. Kennedy is no isolationist in the sense that man's religious problems only concern himself. He speaks to man as a part of a family, as a segment in society, and as an integral part of the world community. His advice and preaching is directed to the ills of the world.

This new era has political, economic, and social implications which overwhelm our imaginations. To patch up our ideas of sovereignty, the waging of war, and international relations is utterly futile. For our survival we must put a new attitude on and dare to think new thoughts.<sup>19</sup>

A most perceptive quality that is reflected in this sermon--and in others--is his ability to speak to the relevant problems that people confront. The teen-ager faces the problem of growing up. It is a stormy time of adjustment. In describing his own years, Kennedy says, "I wavered between periods of greatest confidence and times of agonizing inadequacy. It was ecstasy and despair and it was the dividing line between childhood and youth."<sup>20</sup> Marriage and its accompanying problems are a prevalent concern. The trend to divorce and the rise in marital counselling is an object of concern for his preaching.

Every man is to some degree concerned with the intellectual

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<sup>18</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Parables (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 56.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

problems of religion. This materialistic age has decreed that a part of man's life be spent in consideration of scientific facts. Kennedy is not ignorant of this. However, the thrust of his thought and the appeal of his sermon is to the problem of relationships and morality. He is ministering to people that have suffered alienation; to people who have become anxious because of the prevalence of possible annihilation; to families that are facing inner and outer difficulties; to churches that need guidance; and to sinners who need a message of hope. What is more relevant than that? Kennedy's sermon touches people where they live and in the areas of their needs.

#### B. "Logic and Life"

The relevance of common language is a characteristic of this sermon too. In spite of dealing with the problems of philosophy and the abstractions of paradox, Kennedy explains each aspect of his thought in words that are easily comprehended. The verbiage of the classroom or the technical language of the study is set aside as he brings his ideas to bear upon the basic problems of life.

This sermon begins with an analysis of a condition that is prevalent in the modern era. Man is desperately seeking to find a workable way of life. The complexities of life create a spirit of tension that fills man with manifold anxieties. "The truth of Thoreau's remark that most men live lives of quiet desperation was never more obvious."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Lion and The Lamb (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 13.

In spite of man's abundance and affluence he is a victim of a sickness that cannot easily be cured. The sickness is aggravated by his predilection toward the scientific view of life. He refuses to accept any tenet that is beyond immediate manipulation. A natural result of this pattern of thinking is the creation of a society that is busy with gadgets. He is preoccupied with that which is seen to the exclusion of the transcendent.

Kennedy is also cognizant of the stress that modern man places upon intellectual achievement. It is for this reason that he challenges the authenticity of life that is lived purely on the basis of philosophical evaluations. This sermon comes to grips with this reliance upon the rational side of man's life. "Because the rational side of man's life is one of the essential things about him, philosophies will always be needed, for each man is and must be to some extent a philosopher. But the truth is always beyond, and each philosophy is partial."<sup>22</sup>

He understands the interest that society has for psychology and used Sigmund Freud to substantiate his views. His natural antipathy toward psychology is also suggested in this comment.

The Freudians need criticism at many points, but Freud--like Paul--was one of the pioneers in helping us to understand human nature. One of his observations was the positive desire for life which he called "libido". A man, he suggested, wants life and he wants death; he says Yes and he says No. Neither of these impulses can be eliminated.<sup>23</sup>

A continuing element in Kennedy's concern for relevance is his knowledge of the lack of Christian truth among most of his hearers.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

While the overtones of his sermons reflect a strong moralistic approach, the moralisms are always within the Christian context. He leaves no room for doubt as to the Christian position. It is spelled out, "Gentleness is a Christian virtue. But it is an austere kind of gentleness, which to some minds is illogical and therefore impossible . . . Christian graces must rest on ethical virtues."<sup>24</sup> The paradoxes of the Christian faith, like getting and giving or living and dying are explained so that all might catch the significance of the Christian faith. The understanding of Scripture references is not left to chance. In quoting a passage from the Book of Isaiah, he prefaces it with the comment, "There is a verse in Isaiah describing the future society under the rule of God."<sup>25</sup>

In evaluating this sermon it is apparent that Kennedy has a grasp of the intellectual community as well as the cultural patterns and social mores of the day. His communication is enhanced because of his semantic relevance and his awareness of needs of those to whom he ministers.

### C. "I Will Not Come Down"

This sermon reveals the vigorous phrasing and the relevant verbiage that is employed by Bishop Kennedy. While it does not reflect the smoothness of style and clear grammatical construction of the previous sermons--the sermon was preached without notes and has not been edited--it does show the vigorous language style that is character-

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

istic of him. The short sentences, "What they deserve . . . Come on down. Stop your work. Come on down. Let us tell you why you can't do it,"<sup>26</sup> give a dynamic to the sermon that communicates to the hearers. The absence of a stiltified jargon is again apparent. He is speaking to the common man and it is the usage of understandable words that convey the message at hand.

This specific message reveals his insight into the world at large and the church in particular. The first few minutes of the sermon are taken up with biblical basis for the sermon. This substantiates his feeling that most people are unaware of the framework from which sermons are to be taken. Since the mass of Americans have become biblically illiterate it is imperative for the preacher to acquaint them with a semblance of Scripture background.

Kennedy has a keen grasp of the people who make up the church constituency. They are far from being saints. His realistic understanding of human weakness and the natural consequence upon the life of the church is reflected in this sermon. "Great shock to him--that you are not all saints--no shock to me. I've been in it too long."<sup>27</sup> His evaluation of the sins and foibles that afflict church members is an aid in making his preaching relevant. He is not preaching over their heads or discussing issues that have no meaning to them. This is all part of the secular age in which man lives and worships. To ignore it

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<sup>26</sup>Gerald Kennedy, Sermon: "I Will Not Come Down", Record W-3245-LP. Side 2, Word Record Co., Manuscript p. 4.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

is to become a recluse or at the least an irrelevant preacher.

In this sermon, Kennedy is also presenting his awareness of the forces that often prevail in society. Many of his sermons speak out against the social inequalities of the times; however, in this one he is coming to grips with a spirit of the age that attacks many who are seeking to do right--the smear campaign. He is unhesitating in his condemnation of extremism and the resulting smears upon the country, the individual, and the church. "Haven't you been disturbed and shocked by the attacks that have been made on our statesmen by the super-patriots? Can you imagine anybody calling President Truman and President Eisenhower and President Kennedy a Communist?"<sup>28</sup>

I get so sick and tired of hearing these petitions from various churches against the National Council. For heaven's sake, brethren, do you know what the National Council is? It's the leadership of the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church and the Church of Christ--a Protestantism coming together to look at our world . . . This is a part of our heritage. Stop this silly attacking of the National Council.<sup>29</sup>

Kennedy's relevance is seen in his willingness to speak to the issues at hand. His fearlessness and ability to relate the Gospel to the needs of the world, as well as his awareness as to what those issues are, contribute to his being a relevant preacher.

A further area of relevance is seen in his perspective on the secular dominance of human life. Modern society has contributed to the fragmentation that grips both the ministry and the laity. The ministry is especially tempted to become involved in secondary issues to the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

exclusion of his primary tasks. "I think one of the great temptations of the ministry is to get side-tracked on a secondary issue."<sup>30</sup> This loss of identity and purpose provides a greater challenge to the church to give the guidance necessary for those who are lost. In speaking to this disease that has afflicted man, Kennedy is reflecting his relevance.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FUNCTIONAL VALUE OF THIS STUDY

The content of this study does not intend to reflect an exhausting analysis of the subject. While the limitations of the research are defined in the INTRODUCTION, a further limitation is inherent in the very nature of value. The functional value of the study must be interpreted in the light of current pulpit perspectives and whatever personal prejudices the reader might convey. The themes under discussion and the judgments that are made are subjective in nature. A major functional value comes from the stress given to subjects in need of consideration.

1. Preaching--This study endorses the concept that preaching has priority in the work of the ministry. There can be no substitute for the proclaimed Word if the church is to survive in the modern era. Its prominence in the life of the early Christian community and its apparent demise in recent generations testify to the importance of once again evaluating the nature of proclamation. The prevalent concern for renewal within the church and the subsequent stress on small groups or new forms does not invalidate the priority of preaching. Men like Barth, Dodd, and Ritschl have brought into a clearer focus the sacramental dimension of preaching.

2. Communication--It has only been within recent years that the preacher has become actively concerned with communication. Church-men are beginning to realize that communication is an absolute necessity if

man and God are to be brought together. While the secular world has shown the preacher the importance of communication, the Bible has given him the theological basis for it. This study presents the relationship between communication and preaching and suggests three norms involved in persuasion.

3. Norms--The intangible element in communication must always be understood to be present. Communication cannot be put into a test tube and examined like a scientific experiment. The speaker, the situation, and the listener all possess variables that contribute to this impossibility. However, it is possible to suggest ingredients that are normally present when communication is realized. A sense of urgency is such a prevailing ingredient. The preacher should reflect his concern for those to whom he ministers as well as for the truth that is proclaimed. This mood--it is actually a disposition rather than a tangible tool--is a characteristic quality of most preachers who have been designated as great preachers. This is not to be confused with the stereotype evangelistic preacher of fifty years ago. Urgency is not synonymous with wild gestures and a bombastic voice. It is rather to be equated with compassion and a spirit of empathy on the part of the preacher. A further norm that is espoused in this thesis has to do with simplicity. The sin most often committed by preachers who fail to communicate is the sin of abstractness. The parables of Jesus are ample motivation for the preacher to strive for concrete simplicity in his preaching. This simplicity also affects the structure of the sermon and the style of delivery. The final norm suggested in

the thesis is concerned with the matter of relevance. If the preacher is to communicate, the possibility increases in direct proportion to his relevance in thought and semantic. He must use words that have relevant meaning and must be understood in the world in which he lives. The cultural and social dynamics of the modern era cannot be ignored by the relevant preacher.

4. Bishop Gerald Kennedy--A major theme of this study has been the thought and preaching of Bishop Kennedy. He is widely accepted as an authority in the field of preaching and is recognized as an example of effective communication. The norms previously given have been applied to his preaching and have reflected his manner of preaching. It is always dangerous to emulate the style of preaching of another, regardless of his prominence. Kennedy would be the first to decry his becoming a pattern for others. However, the basic elements that characterize his preaching can well be adapted by other preachers who seek to communicate. This thesis has not attempted to encompass his preaching with the suggested norms, they have quite naturally been drawn from his emphases and his sermons. Because of the indictment of irrelevance against the modern pulpit, it is encouraging and of extreme value to witness the charge refuted by such as Bishop Gerald Kennedy.

## APPENDIX A

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BISHOP KENNEDY

Gerald Hamilton Kennedy was born in 1908 in the State of Michigan. His mother was born in Vermont while his father's family came from Canada. There is some substance to the idea that the Kennedy name originally came from the north of Ireland. It was his mother who first directed his mind toward reading. She had taught school and was adept at opening his mind to the world of books. His father was a local preacher in The Methodist Church but because of limited education the tendency to be on the move became prevalent and he never achieved much success in the ministry. There seems to be little appreciation for the accomplishments and abilities of his father, in the writings of Kennedy.

A prevailing attitude in his autobiography, While I'm On My Feet, is the awareness of poverty in his youth. The financial structure of the Kennedy home was certainly less than adequate. This necessitated the children--including Gerald Hamilton--assuming jobs that would supplement the family income. These conditions are looked on by Kennedy as influencing his entire life. Others of his friends always possessed a security status that he never knew. These early conditions contributed to a very difficult time during adolescence. He remembers it as being a time of loneliness, bashfulness, and withdrawal.

The Kennedy family had moved to California in 1913, and for the next several years the activities of the family centered in that State.

It was natural for Gerald to assume the religious faith of his parents. His parents took him to church from his earliest years. From various intimations, it can be assumed that the climate of the home was of a fundamentalist nature.

The turning point in his life came when he was introduced to the discipline of public speaking. While he remembers many of his grade school teachers, the outstanding teacher in this period of his life was a Miss Margaret Painter. She taught public speaking and debate at Modesto High School. Not only did her interest and ability channel the speaking interests in his life, but the ability that he achieved opened up social doors that strengthened his life. Undoubtedly this influence contributed to his decision to begin preaching. Kennedy preached his first sermon at fifteen years of age and was soon licensed as a lay preacher. The succeeding years have broadened the scope of his interest and abilities, but nothing has changed his love and concern for preaching. This became such a compulsion in his youth that his goal was to become the greatest preacher in America.

Kennedy was the first one in his family to attend college. In 1924 he registered at the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California. This is a Methodist institution and at that time had an enrollment of approximately a thousand students. After a brief stay at Modesto Junior College--because of a financial problem--he returned to the College of the Pacific and graduated in 1929. It was during his first year at the Junior College that he was appointed to his first pastoral charge. He became supply pastor for a small Methodist Church in

Riverbank, California. It was during his junior year in college that he married his high school sweetheart, Mary Grace Leeper. At the time of marriage he was 20 and she was 18. It was during his college years that Kennedy became established in the Christian faith and gained confidence in the church. In spite of being confronted with a severe liberal approach, he maintained his faith in the Bible and the Christian perspective.

Following his college education, Kennedy enrolled at the Pacific School of Religion. He looks at these formative years as some of the most significant in his life. Men like James Muilenberg, George Hedley, C. C. McCown, and John Buckham influenced him greatly. The only regret that he suggests about his seminary training was the limited time that he had for social activities. The academic load plus the responsibilities of a church consumed his time. During these years he pastored a small church at Manteca, California, about seventy-five miles from the school. While he was attending school his wife worked as a secretary in San Francisco. It is probably because of this strenuous schedule that Kennedy developed a habit of long and arduous hours. The demand for work and intensity has become a habit in his life.

After his graduation from seminary, Kennedy applied for a fellowship and was accepted as a candidate for the Ph. D. degree at Hartford Seminary. He had early in his training set his eyes on this doctoral degree and it was with diligence that he pursued it. In the autumn of 1932 he and his wife drove a 1929 Model A Ford across the continent. It was while working on his doctorate that he came in

contact with the man who most influenced him. H. H. Farmer was that man and many of Kennedy's ideas and beliefs were crystallized under the guidance of Farmer. Having passed the curriculum requirements and written his thesis on the subject, "Human Nature According to St. Paul", Gerald H. Kennedy was the recipient of the Ph. D. degree in May of 1934. It was during his graduate days that Kennedy pastored the Congregational Church at Collinsville, fifteen miles west of Hartford, Connecticut.

At the conclusion of graduation, Kennedy made plans for a trip to Europe, and he and another fellow travelled over much of that continent. Many impressions were made on him that were lasting. Shortly after his return he resigned the Congregational Church and was assigned by his bishop to the Calvary Methodist Church of San Jose, California. This first year in the full time pastorate was a critical year in his ministry. The problems of the church and his own self-doubt created a spirit of despair for him. Through the devotion of his wife and a spiritual deepening he became assured of God's ability to sustain him. There was a turning point in his life from those days. He recalls the church with both rejoicing and remorse.

A significant change happened in his life in 1940 when he was appointed to the First Methodist Church in Palo Alto. This was in an entirely different community, mainly because of Stanford University. The people and the environment made these years of pastoring a time of personal satisfaction. Because of the Stanford Chapel and the challenge of competition, Kennedy worked diligently at the task of being the best minister and preacher he could be. The response to his ministry at

Palo Alto gave him an enthusiasm for the pastorate as well as a deepened devotion to the Methodist Church. It was during this pastorate that he became infected with the desire to write. After consulting with Dr. Elton Trueblood, who was pastoring the Stanford Chapel, he began following the sage advice, "to start."

Two years prior to his moving to Palo Alto, he had been invited to teach at the Pacific School of Religion. This was to become a challenge and meaningful experience in his ministry. Teach homiletics in the school from which he had graduated was a goal realized. From this discipline came his own book on preaching, His Word Through Preaching. After this introduction to the faculty side of academics he has taken advantage of other invitations. During the years he has taught classes at Nebraska Wesleyan University, Union, Garrett, Iliff, and the School of Theology at Claremont. In spite of occasional pressure to limit his ministry to the seminaries, he has continued in the pastoring or administrative fields.

The strongest pulpit that Kennedy occupied as a pastor was at Lincoln, Nebraska. After a short pastorate in Palo Alto, he accepted the appointment to the St. Paul's Methodist Church. This situation was in the downtown area and proved to be the kind of church made for the future bishop. In spite of a homesick beginning, Kennedy was adequate for the demands of that church. He became involved in a strong student ministry and also active in the city affairs. He looks at this charge as the high point of his pastoral ministry and from every indication, he is accurate. He remembers the years in Nebraska as being wonderful.

On July 6, 1948, Kennedy had returned from a movie with his wife when a telegram arrived at the parsonage informing him that he had been elected a bishop by the Western Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church. His six years of wonderful living in Nebraska were at an end. In a very short time he was consecrated to the office and assumed his duties in the Portland Area. The new demands were not easily adjusted to but he diligently worked at the task of being a successful bishop and a good leader for the membership of that Conference. He was tempted to go back to the pastoral responsibilities, but as bishop he had become pastor to hundreds of ministers.

After four years in the Portland Area, Kennedy was assigned to the Los Angeles Area. Since 1952 he has led the Southern California-Arizona Conference. Under his guidance the conference has grown in an unprecedented way.

In the intervening years since his election as bishop, many honors have come to Bishop Gerald Kennedy. He has been president of the Council of Bishops, he has grown in influence until he is the recognized voice of Methodism, he is an accepted leader in Protestantism, and in the opinion of many he has achieved his goal of being the greatest preacher in America. He has not been content to remain purely in the administrative office. In these years he has written many books and delivered many lectures. The range of his involvement includes sponsoring a drama group and serving on the State Board of Education. In the struggle for human freedom he has also been in the lead. His pioneering efforts in integration have raised the ire of a few but the respect

of hundreds.

At the age of 57, Gerald Hamilton Kennedy is still young for a bishop but is old in terms of the seventeen years he has served as bishop. Unless providentially hindered the future will give further opportunity for the talents and spirit of Bishop Gerald Kennedy to be expressed.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX B

### "PATCHES ON OLD CLOTH"<sup>1</sup>

"And no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made."  
--Matthew 9:16

There was a man who worried whenever he had to buy something new. He was not poor, but the idea of purchasing a new suit, a pair of shoes or a car sent him into a deep depression. He could hardly stand to think of things wearing out. This, no doubt, is an extreme instance, but the relation between the new and the old is a problem to all of us. For the idea of change is something we must live with, but something few of us learn to accept gracefully.

On the larger scale, we find it difficult to determine a working relationship between the eternal and the contemporary. What is to be discarded and what is to be maintained? Where is the line between faithfulness and stubbornness? In one of my churches I was on the air from 11:30 A.M. until 11:59 A.M. The opening half-hour of the service was sometimes a nightmare to me because of the timing. With other men participating in the service, I never had complete control, yet it was most important to begin the sermon on the stroke of 11:30. It came to me one day that this represented one of the paradoxes of human exper-

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Parables (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960).

ience. I was preaching the eternal Gospel, but I was at the same time desperately aware of minutes.

Jesus' attitude toward this problem was an anomaly to many of his contemporaries. They wanted to hang on when he thought it was time to let go. They thought they could drop some matters which he felt meant the loss of the soul. There is a sense in which Jesus came to tell men how to work out the relationship between the settler and the pioneer.

There are two brief parables which deal with this theme. One tells about the uselessness of sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for when the garment is washed, the patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth. The other speaks of what happens when you put new wine into old wineskins; it is necessary, Jesus says, to put new wine into "new" wineskins.

We might begin with the obvious reflection that "we prefer the old and the familiar." New things are uncertain and sometimes dangerous. We feel more at home with known situations and places.

Now much of this human tendency is good and necessary. A people forever running off after some new thing would never build a civilization. It is not easy to define what we mean by a particular culture or society. Arnold Toynbee has given us a broader and I think truer view of the nature of a human society than any other thinker has given. A civilization, he says, consists of certain commonly held values and ways of behavior. It is bound together in a framework of thought and in a pattern of attitudes and sympathies. Civilization would not be possible

without great affection in the hearts of each new generation for the old ways and values. For if we lose our respect for what we may call our way, then we are wide open to the invasion of something different. As has been said often, the threat of communism becomes dangerous only when we lose faith in democracy. It is this tendency to develop an affection for the known that makes it possible to create a continuing life for many generations.

The main difference between nations lies in their memories and in the traditions which they know and love. We tend to overromanticize our past, it is true, but the great events which gave us our national birth also give us our unity. The year 1776 cannot mean the same things to a German as to an American. The Declaration of Independence or the Gettysburg Address has particular significance to those who claim this country as home. This is not just a matter of birth, for we may choose our traditions and our homelands. The schoolboy whose ancestor came on the "Mayflower" may have no more feeling of belonging than the recent immigrant going to night school to prepare for his citizenship examination. When we cast in our lot with a nation, all that has gone before becomes part of our possession.

A religious people is more aware of the importance that the new generation shall learn the meaning of its past. One of the great passages in the Old Testament speaks eloquently of this responsibility:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,

and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deut. 6:4-9.

Isarel never doubted that each generation owed the next one a faithful account of the past.

Children are conservative and need to be among familiar scenes and with people they know. During World War II, some children were moved from London into the country. The blitz was going on and it was assumed that the terror would be destructive of the youngster's health. But strangely enough, the children seemed to get along better when they stayed in their homes in the city. We can face danger more bravely if we are not thrust out into new and unfamiliar surroundings at the same time.

Like every good thing, however, this human tendency can be carried too far and destroy us. An inordinate affection for the old will find us hanging on to the past too long. One of the Greek philosophers thought the process of life could best be summed up as a constant flux. It did not progress ultimately, but he regarded it as constantly shifting and changing. The Christian believes that life has movement and purpose so that he cannot commit himself to any permanent resting place here.

The disaster which often overtakes a nation that has won a war is due to its failure to consider what is necessary for the next victory. So it prepares for the past. The new conditions tear away from the old cloth and the garment is ruined. It is hardly too much to say that the main problem confronting a country is to keep its government aware of

contemporary conditions. Too many politicians are fighting battles that were won years ago or are no longer relevant.

Some time ago I attended a service of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Istanbul. It was of great interest to me though it was very long. There were very few young people present. When I talked about it with the Ecumenical Patriarch later on, he said the service needed to be revised but that would demand the calling of an Ecumenical Council. I asked him when the last such council was held and he said in the eighth century. Then I asked why they did not call the council into session and he said they were not yet ready for it. To a churchman who is used to a General Conference with full legislative powers meeting every four years, this seemed a little conservative. The Church often finds it difficult to believe that old ways demand some revision.

There is a story about an Arab who felt hungry one night, lighted a candle, and opened a date. It was wormy and he threw it aside. He tried another and it had worms, and so did the third. Whereupon he blew out the candle and ate the fourth one. Rather than face unpleasant realities, we often find it easier to stay with things as they are and hope for the best. It hardly ever works.

Jesus was describing in this story a "law of life." There are times when we cannot patch up the old. There are occasions which demand a new garment. These experiences are often painful, but in the long run they mean growth.

In 1954 Dr. Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, and Dr. Luther Gulick, a city administrator, made speeches which were reported in the

New York Times. The paper commented on the two addresses and said that both speakers had "hit by chance upon a common conclusion--in any culture, the infusion of new ideas and new people disrupts things for a while, but it is beneficial in the long run."

A society or nation goes through crucial times although they are not recognized always as demanding radical changes in outlook. We sometimes try to hang on to the old long after it is useless. In 1776, for instance, it was not inevitable that we chose independence. There were opportunities for adjustments and compromises with Britain, and the colonies might have continued their life as a part of the Empire. But when the decision was made for freedom, the old ways were gone. Later, when Lincoln said that this nation could not endure half slave and half free, the die was cast for a struggle that would be another dividing point in our history.

We live in such a crucial time and much of our trouble is a vain attempt to patch up a garment that is no longer adequate. Professor Arthur Holly Compton put it this way: "On 2 December 1942 in the city of Chicago, U.S.A., a man first liberated and controlled the power within the atom. This event was known only to a few. To those few it was a turning point in history, the birth of a new era."<sup>1</sup> This new era has political, economic, and social implications which overwhelm our imaginations. To patch up our ideas of sovereignty, the waging of war, and international relations is utterly futile. For our survival we must

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<sup>1</sup>The Atomic Quest, Oxford, 1956, p. 139.

put on a new attitude and dare to think new thoughts.

When Columbus made his voyage to the New World, it was no use for the Old World to pretend that nothing much had happened and try to conduct its business as usual. Everything was changed and men had to accept a larger point of view and make their plans on a new plane. The launching of Sputnik has opened to us the vision of space travel and planetary exploration. We have been brought into a moment of history that is a dividing point. Everything before is on a different level and must be so noted. To try to put this new patch on the old cloth will not work. To put this new wine into the old wineskins will mean only an explosion.

These times do not only occur on a world-wide stage, but they are a part of every man's life, and form the pattern of personal growth. The painful experience of growing up is caused by life forcing us into periods of radical change. I expect it works differently for different people, but no life is quite free from crucial periods of adjustment that hurt. The religious educators talked at one time about a smooth development which would bring children into full spiritual maturity without any sudden or jarring experience. It was a good theory but I never knew an instance where it worked.

Take that famous period known as the teen age. We are probably exaggerating its uniqueness so that we encourage a self-conscious turmoil in the lives of teen-agers who try to live up to our expectations. But I remember my own adolescence and not with any pleasure. It was a stormy, strained time when life looked beautiful one moment and quite

hopeless the next. I wavered between periods of greatest confidence and times of agonizing inadequacy. It was ecstasy and despair and it was the dividing line between childhood and youth. There are people who never quite pass through adolescence and in their later years continue to show the emotional instability of the teen-ager. But if it works properly, one goes through it and puts on another garment.

A marriage is one of those crucial experiences. To start a new home is difficult enough under the best of circumstances. But if a well-meaning parent tries to keep a son or daughter bound within the old family circle, trouble really comes to the new home. In my more bitter moments I have thought that those who have the best chances for happy marriages are orphans. It must be difficult for a mother to let her child go, but if she does not, she sets up a conflict which can ruin his life. Marriage is something new and not just a patch on something old.

In religion, the argument goes on between those who believe in sudden conversion and the champions of gradualness. Does a man find God on a Damascus road, or is the encounter made without any emotional manifestations? The answer is that religion, like every great experience, finds a man according to his temperament. Some people will make a regular emotional orgy out of sending a child to camp. Others will face death quietly and with no outward sign of sorrow.

I am convinced, however, that when Christ finds us we are aware of a turning point that makes all things new. That horrible definition of religion as "morality tinged with emotion" misses the whole matter. The Christian experience is devastating and uplifting, despairing and

confident, shattering and creative. It deals with the eternal but it comes like a sunrise promising a new day and a new life.

In the 1925 Rose Bowl game, Notre Dame beat Stanford 27 to 10, in spite of Stanford's making the most first downs. Pop Warner intimated that his team should be considered the winner in spite of the score. Rockne's reply was: "Right, and next summer we'll decide baseball games by the number of men left on base." Life is not a matter of running back and forth on the field, but of crossing the goal line. And when that has happened, there is a new situation and a new possibility.

This law puts "a demand on human nature." Only a creature with a flexible spirit can live in such a world.

We ought to recognize that it is not only physical arteries that harden, but a man's spiritual outlook may become stiff and unbending. It is my privilege to work in Arizona and I have seen miracles of healing brought about by that warm, dry climate. It is particularly effective for some forms of arthritis. Preachers have told me of people arriving on stretchers and, after only a few months, walking again. One little girl came looking like a pale shadow, and within four months she was attending school regularly with the appearance of perfect health. More than one of the ministers in our Arizona churches came seeking health for themselves or for members of their families, and found it beyond their expectations. I have thought sometimes how fine it would be if some healing sun would shine on our stiff prejudices, our twisted attitudes, our lame minds. For the years tend to cripple

our spirits.

The church is always in danger of losing its flexibility. It becomes fearful of the new discovery, the different environment. It falls into patterns of behavior which worked well enough a hundred years ago but do not quite fit the urban life of today. I grow weary of listening to church people talk about the good old revivals as if talking about them would bring them back or make them work now. "New occasions teach new duties," as Lowell said, and a Church with a flexible approach will find the right method for the present proclamation of the Gospel.

Life demands that men shall have adventurous minds. No man is at home in this world who decides to stop at some point and travel no farther. For the best picture of our life is a journey and we must remain always as men who expect to see strange and wonderful sights ahead. Not the least of the gifts of Christ is this welcoming of the future with great expectations.

John Wesley had what Umphrey Lee, late president of Southern Methodist University, called "an itinerant mind." He had an intense curiosity about everything that could possibly affect human welfare. To read his "Journal" is to be impressed by his activities and the breadth of his interests. He thought the new electrical treatments promised great things for health and he advised his people, "Be electrified daily." Until his death at the age of eighty-eight, life was a thrilling adventure for him.

I shall not forget a morning I spent with Kagawa a few years ago.

The great impression I have kept was of his knowledge of so many fields and of his interest in so many subjects. He talked about fishing and geology. He was interested in experimenting with Swiss cattle on the Japanese mountains. There was the kind of interest and excitement about him that you expect in a boy, and the youthful quality of his spirit still lifts up my heart. There is no surer sign that a man has been with Jesus Christ than this exuberance and sense of adventure.

Some time ago there was a sign on Lexington Avenue in New York City: "Keeping pace with the progress of the community . . . a new funeral chapel." There is a bitter symbolism in this which describes our age. We prepare the instruments of death and call it progress. We spend our billions for destruction but make only a few feeble efforts toward salvation. We need the Lord of Life to touch us with his healing that we may be flexible and adventurous enough to choose life.

Finally, let us note that "Christ unites the old and the new." He brings into men's lives and their societies the proper balance between the old garments which sometimes have to be patched and the new garments which we must be ready to put on.

Life has its crises but it also has its continuity. The wisdom of yesterday is one of our most precious possessions and we will ignore it to our sorrow. Jesus said that he came to fulfill and not to destroy and he was never unappreciative of past accomplishments. No generation ever outgrows or moves beyond the Bible; its wisdom undergirds all of our past history and our future hopes.

We cannot afford to take all our guidance from the writings of

our contemporaries; the men of the past must still speak to us with authority. There was a college girl who needed two units of science and chose paleontology because it came at a convenient time. She said to the professor, "I am an English major and have no interest in fossils. Why should I have to take this course?" The professor answered mildly, "My dear young lady, what are you going to English about?" All that has gone on before us furnishes us the experience out of which we must make our decisions. Modern techniques and ancient wisdom make a fine combination which is impossible when either one ignores the other.

Now the Christian becomes aware of the past as having living and vital values for the present. Martin Luther freed the Word of God and let it speak to his own heart and then to his people. It became again a living Word that spoke what sixteenth-century men needed to hear. John Wesley in the eighteenth century proclaimed that Christianity was to be experienced freshly every morning. The Gospel which is the same since the beginning also promises to make all things new. I do not know anything like Christianity to help a man or a generation respect the past and welcome the future.

There was a social worker assigned to distribute used clothing at a center in a city slum. Another brought her twelve-year-old son in to get him an overcoat for the cold winter. The boy was sullen and perhaps embarrassed. The social worker in looking through the pile of clothing found a boy's coat that seemed entirely new with no sign of wear. Some rich family, perhaps, had put it aside and forgotten about it. "Son," said the man, "try this on." The boy put it on slowly and

then began to touch it and look at it. His eyes grew wide with a quiet excitement. "Why," he gasped, "it's new!"

Can you imagine what it meant for that boy to wear something new for the first time? He had known only the worn-out clothes of other children and the outgrown garments of older boys. But this was a new coat. Something like that happens to the man who "puts on Christ," for it means a new life, a new hope, a new garment of confidence and freedom.

## APPENDIX C

### "LOGIC AND LIFE"<sup>2</sup>

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.

--Luke 10:21

Men have seldom been more concerned to find a workable way of life than they are now. The book which claims to tell people how to live happily can be sure of a sale. The lecturer with a magic formula for making life interesting will have an audience. We are almost desperate in our desire to have someone tell us how to live in the midst of tension. The truth of Thoreau's remark that most men live lives of quiet desperation was never more obvious.

This is a sure sign of the sickness of our time. Whenever a generation talks long and anxiously about a philosophy of life, you may be sure it does not have one that works. We are not worried about our health until we are sick; we are not concerned about happiness except when we are bored; we are not anxious for the good life until we are overwhelmed with the evil of our present life.

Our search is limited and confined by our scientific presuppositions. We think that all of our problems can be reduced to an equation. If two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen equal water, then

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<sup>2</sup>Gerald Kennedy, The Lion and The Lamb (New York: Abingdon Press, 1950), Sermon "Logic and Life."

happiness ought to equal two parts of this and one part of that. We go to the counselor in the same spirit we go to the druggist---we want a prescription. We cannot believe that any value is beyond our external manipulations. We are like the two Arabs Colonel Lawrence took with him to London. They were entranced by the gadgets of Western civilizations. When they were leaving, Lawrence asked them what they would like for a gift. They said they wanted two hot water faucets. They assumed that by turning the handle they might have hot water in the middle of the desert, the same as in London hotel room. We are like that. Tell us how to turn a handle or mix a tonic. Give us an intellectual proposition. In a word, let some wise man formulate for us a philosophy of life.

#### Desire For A Philosophy

Youth is the time for philosophizing with assurance, for youth is not aware of its own limitations and the limitations of human knowledge. With what confidence we participated in bull sessions when we were in high school or college! How profound and unanswerable were our opinions in those midnight fraternity or sorority debates! None of us would give up the memories of those memorable occasions, but the older we grow, the more we realize that there are more things in life than we dreamed about in our discussions. Is it too much to say that the most we can hope for from a philosophy is a formulation of the right questions? In a realm of intangibles, in a realm beyond logic, are the answers.

A book written by an eminent physicist proposes a next step in the development of man.<sup>1</sup> The author says that we need to discover a "unitary method of thought." Quite so! But how? Around what center shall the unity be established? He apparently assumes that if men are told about this need, they will find an answer to it. It is still the scientific heresy that knowledge is moral.

We go wrong in all of this because we assume that men are purely rational creatures who act only from rational motives. We think that the healing of the ills of our life is an intellectual matter. It is not. We think we go wrong because we are ignorant. We believe that if we had facts enough, we would be able to chart our course realistically. Not so! It is not true that a man's happiness depends on his knowledge. For character is not all of a piece and the most incongruous traits exist side by side.

Some time ago a group of workmen were putting up a prefabricated house in Illinois. In an attempt to make some kind of record, they put it together so fast that one of them was caught in it. They had to tear down a section in order to let him out. Which is a parable! The philosophical system imprisons the human spirit. Systems are always needed to be torn down to let out the soul of man.

#### The Inadequacies of Philosophy

Because the rational side of a man's life is one of the essen-

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<sup>1</sup>Lancelot Law Whyte, The Next Development in Man (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1948).

tial things about him, philosophies will always be needed, for each man is and must be to some extent a philosopher. But the truth is always beyond, and each philosophy is partial. No one knows this better than the student who has to study a history of thought. Each great thinker had an idea that was true. But there is the constant necessity of balancing one man's thought with another's; we must put this system over against that one. There seems to be something that is uncapturable by thought, and that indefinable something finally wrecks the system.

What does this mean? It means that it is not a matter of the world's being either reasonable or unreasonable. It is rather, as G. K. Chesterton pointed out, that the world is almost reasonable, but not quite. There is meaning in life. It has a purpose. There are principles underlying the world, and a mighty order is discernible. But there is also a kind of wildness which lies in wait for the logician. There is a kind of defiance of our reason which is also a part of life. This is the unexpected, the unreasonable, the terribly mysterious element which waits in ambush for our unwary minds. There is, in a word, something in life which hates logic and will not be confined by it.

Let us learn a lesson from precious stones. Sometimes their beauty is due to their imperfections and their irregularities. It is a trace of foreign matter that catches the eye. The chance presence of chromium in a piece of beryl makes that stone an emerald, and star sapphires contain tiny impurities which reflect light. One of the main problems in the manufacture of synthetic stones is how to copy nature's

imperfections. A cold perfection is lifeless.

Francis Bacon was aware of the danger of assuming more order in the universe than there actually is. This man, who stood at the threshold of the modern period and was able to perceive the limitations of the medieval scholastics, saw that in the enthusiasm of discovering "laws" of nature we might fail to see the areas beyond the laws. It is this warning which we have failed to heed. The undriendliness of science toward revelation and miracle has been due to its cock sureness that although absolute order cannot be proved, it must be assumed. Science has given us a closed universe--with a vengeance. Nothing in life, says our logic, should be assumed beyond the realm of rational description and explanation. Perhaps nothing in modern times has been more damaging to true wisdom than this dogma.

When a philosopher has established his system, he can hardly help believing it is a finality. Now everything must fit the system. The fact which seems to contradict his order he interprets in such a way that it falls into the right groove. Or if something in life seems to defy even this treatment, he assumes that it is too unimportant to warrant serious consideration. The trouble is that systems of thought tend to become strait jackets or Procrustean beds. Philosophers are affected by this tendency, as well as ordinary men. The preconceived orderly system has the same dangers as prejudice. No man can write history or interpret history without having his own preconceptions color his interpretation of the facts. There is no such thing as a purely objective history, nor can there be. But, at the very least, we

should demand that historians refrain from converting history into world systems.

Making history fit a system is like having made up one's mind about another person. Once one has accepted a judgment about another man, he should no longer expect to know him. Each person is full of surprises. There are no set rules that will encompass a personality satisfactorily. If a man has made up his mind that another race is lazy, for example, there is nothing members of that race can do to change his mind. He will interpret every action in terms of the laziness thesis. The philosopher with a system is always doing that to life. Indeed, he cannot escape doing it. The system misses something, overemphasizes something, and disregards something. It has an unredeemed lust for order and consistency.

But not only that. A philosophy is to an amazing extend determined by a man's temperament. It rises from many causes. It is colored by personal relations, by health, by glands, by too many stimulations or by too few hours of quietness. What appears to one man as the good life may appear to another as a nightmare. The optimist cannot help viewing life differently from the pessimist, and his interpretation may seem like drivel to the pessimist. Every philosophy, being a human affair, has to be confronted with the question of what person it is to be applied to and when and where.

My idea of a wonderful way to spend an evening is to stay home and read a book. I'd rather do that than almost anything I know. But to lay down as a general principle that the way to spend one's evening

is to stay home and read a book would cause a vast number of young people, especially, to turn away in disgust. Stay at home every night? That is the last thing they want to do. So any philosophy is necessarily a limited thing and, to a large extent, dependent on the temperament of the philosopher.

An editor broke away from Communism and went back into the Roman Catholic Church. He wrote a book confessing his guilt and giving the reasons for his conversion.<sup>2</sup> It is not such a long way as you might think from an authoritarian system like Communism to an authoritarian system like Catholicism. But the interesting thing about the book is the man's analysis of why he sinned against the light for so long. He says that, although critical of the Communist Party in America, he continued in it because he was enslaved by the Marxist "philosophy." It was his yardstick by which he measured all policies, and no matter what happened, he always had a system which could explain the most contradictory facts with a forced unity. Thus he went on as if he had been mesmerized.

When we are seeking for life, we need more than an intellectual pattern. We must always be on guard lest our philosophy keep us from life.

#### Life Is Paradox

The inadequacy of philosophy is due to the fact that life is par-

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<sup>2</sup>Louis Francis Buedenz, This Is My Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1947).

adoxical. That is, it demands that we hold together in a kind of tension what seem to be contradictions. This is not to say that life is an absolute dualism, though it may appear both dualistic and monistic at the same time. Its unity is over and above its diversity. The desire for logic will never allow this to be recognized. But the Christianity which is truly realistic is not afraid of paradox and sets forth its truth in paradoxes. The Christian stumbling block for many men is its insistence that if we are to find life, we must be willing to lose it.

Man himself is a paradox. He is a free spirit, and he makes his own choices. In his mind he roams the heavens, and in his spirit he becomes a citizen of eternity. No external force can conquer him, and all external authorities finally have to yield before his ability to say No. But man is also determined by physical laws, and his body is severely limited by his physical environment. He cannot spread his arms and fly or live under the sea like a fish. If he leaps from a high building, he gets hurt. It seems that he must be continually at war with himself. He wants to be free, but he is a slave. How can a free spirit imprisoned in a physical body find a way of life that is not a constant conflict? Of one thing we can be sure--it will have to be a way beyond logic.

The Freudians need criticism at many points, but Freud--like Paul--was one of the great pioneers in helping us to understand human nature. One of his observations was the positive desire for life which he called "libido" and the negative impulse toward death which he called

"mortido." A man, he suggested, wants life and he wants death; he says Yes and he says No. Neither of these impulses can be eliminated. They must somehow find their rightful places in an over-all synthesis. For it is true, in a way which our philosophies can never quite explain, that for a man to find life he must not be afraid of death.

Even physics, which is in some ways a most static science, tells us that the most stable objects seem to be balances of forces. The physical universe is not at all what we once thought it was. The so-called solid stuff is not solid. What we once thought was stationary mass is really whirling energy. Electrons may be particles or they may be waves, and the physicist has to use an equation that will work in either case. At the very heart of things there seems to be an uncertainty. You might call it chance, or perhaps you might suggest that the physical universe has a kind of free will. Apparently our picture of the world as a machine is no longer a fitting one. The universe is more like an idea, and it seems to have less and less the likeness of a closed system. Even here, then, the wildness lies in wait. Things are not so solid and safe as we thought.

In our social behavior and our ethical systems we can never reduce things to rules. Here too there has to be the tension of opposites. Once we try to make absolutes out of ethical principles, we turn our virtues into vices. Take mercy as an example. Is it a good thing for a man to bestow mercy? Certainly! It "droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven." But suppose mercy is not checked by justice? Why, then mercy becomes a sentimental, mushy thing that makes human relationships

impossible. Over against our willingness to be merciful, there has to be our insistence on justice. Somehow these two qualities have to be kept in balance.

Gentleness is a Christian virtue. But it is an austere kind of gentleness, which to some minds is illogical and therefore impossible. It has been the great accomplishment of the gospel to hold our understanding of the gentleness of God's commands over against the severity of his purposes. Men must do the same thing in their personal relations. Christian graces must rest on ethical virtues. No single virtue can stand alone.

Or consider humility and pride. Certain it is that Christians are warned against the sin of pride and urged to practice the virtue of humility. The theologians who warn us against pride as the most unlovely of human weakness and the fundamental sin are right. But a humility that is not challenged by a sense of worth and a feeling of self-respect becomes a crawling thing which no one can admire. If humility knows no anger and lacks the power of inner confidence, it is not at all admirable. Men should be humble, and they should also have a holy pride in the value of their sonship. All of this is in the realm of spiritual mystery and goes far beyond our intellectual power to describe. We know when we see a person with these combinations in the right proportion, but we do not know how to write out the formula for them.

There is a verse in Isaiah describing the future society under the rule of God: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the

leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." (Isaiah 11:6.) We can easily miss an important point in this prophecy. It does not say that all shall become the same. The wolf is not to become lamblike nor the calf lionlike. Each maintains his own nature, but they dwell together. Let the leopard remain a leopard and the calf keep the qualities of a calf. But let them walk together and find their unity in the leadership of a little child.

Something of that is necessary in all of life. Things as different as the lion and the lamb must be held together in the subjection to a higher power. There must be a divine discipline which can keep each from destroying, or being destroyed by, the other. This takes more than a set of rules or principles. It takes the power of God and a divine revelation.

#### The Gospel Above Logic

Christianity suggests a way of living that often seems contrary to logic. It is not something you could have guessed. It is not something reducible to reason. It breaks in. It startles. It overwhelms our carefulness. It opens a vista so breath-taking that we can hardly stretch our minds and spirits wide enough to take it in. The man who has not allowed his familiarity with it to breed contempt knows that this is the most exciting thing he has ever heard. If the gospel is true, what a devastating thing it is to our intellectual limitations.

Chesterton once remarked that a mathematician tries to get the

heavens into his head, while the poet tries to get his head into the heavens. This is also the difference between a philosopher and a religious man. The philosopher tends to say that if it cannot be crammed into his head, he does not want it. The religious man knows that the mystery of life is too vast to be crammed into anything, especially his head. He must therefore open his heart and his mind to God, who alone can give him light. Let him find faith.

This is why our religion goes wrong when it falls too much under the sway of systematic theologians. Theology is not an intellectual exercise of the cloister, but a statement of experience from Christians facing live issues. When Christianity is regarded as a "system" contained in certain intellectual propositions, the life goes from it and its truth is distorted. For then it moves toward a "philosophy of religion" which is mummified religion. This is not to minimize the importance of theology's contribution to Christianity, but it is to warn against substituting philosophy for faith. Forms are necessary, but it is to not confuse them with life. If one seeks the heart of the gospel, he must not search for it in the creeds or in the carefully reasoned discourses of the scholastics. He must meet the one who said, "I came that they may have life."

How often the gospel goes against all our common sense. It says that if we want to get, we must give. How can a man get by giving? Let him get by keeping, says the mind. Keep the other fellows out and protect your investment; never share with the outsiders. This is the reasonable way. But the gospel says that if we follow that way, we

shall lose even the little we have. The path to abundant living, says our Lord, is by way of renunciation. Albert Schweitzer found that after he had given up his music and his scholarship for the sake of his missionary task in Africa, it all came back to him sevenfold. The time came when he was lecturing at the great universities and playing the organ in all the leading capitals. What a mysterious thing this giving is! What a denial of logic life is! In order to get, you must give.

Or let us consider the matter of winning. Do you want to win? Everyone does. Well then, says Christianity, do not be afraid of losing for to gain the world you must lose. But if you determine to win the world at any price, you will discover that you have lost your own soul, for which man can give nothing in exchange. How often the careful man has planned his career in terms of what he wants only to find his deepest desires have been denied and what he really wanted has been lost. Yet how often a man has been called upon to give up what his ambition told him was valuable, only find that a better gift was given in its place.

A man has to die to live. He must be born again. He has to think of himself as unimportant in order to be important. To heal himself he must forget himself and heal others. The kind of religion which turns men's eyes inward upon themselves is false and destructive. There is a heretical, watered-down, unbalanced religion, which is very popular today. It massages the emotions and makes people so aware of themselves that we are in danger of becoming a generation of college freshmen with one semester of abnormal psychology. Jesus called men to

follow him, knowing that they would be healed by forgetting themselves in his service. We save our lives by risking them.

Christianity dares to go beyond logic, because life does. It dares to say the thing that seems to contradict reason, because life does. It is not afraid to state its truth in paradoxes, because life does. To men they stand at the crossroads it comes, not without a system, but with a revelation. It demands a plunge, decision, action. For this is where the issues of life are decided, and not in an arm-chair working intellectual exercises.

The Christian can never quite say what the gospel means. But he knows that while others stand by the roadside debating and wondering, he is a part of a mighty fellowship which knows an answer. He sees others debating what constitutes the good life and the happy life. But all of his energies have been drawn into a great cursade which--as Paul said--makes his life a constant pageant. If the Christian spoke to these debaters, he could use the words Henry IV addressed to the tardy Crillon: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon: we have fought at Arques and you were not there." But his spirit is more like that of his Lord, who wept over the city because it was too proud and sophisticated to accept his gift of life. Christians have found life and truth in a realm beyond logic.

## APPENDIX D

### "I WILL NOT COME DOWN"<sup>3</sup>

My thought this morning again comes from a verse in an Old Testament Book which I suspect is not used too much by most of us. It's the Book of Nehemiah, the 6th Chapter of the 3rd verse: "And I sent messengers unto them saying 'I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down'." The story, I think, is probably familiar to most of you--Nehemiah was a Jew, an exiled Jew, carried away by the Babylonians. And after the Persians had come into power with a freer spirit of cooperation with the Jews, he rose very highly and he became an officer of the king. One day he was talking to a man who had returned from Jerusalem and he asked him how things were in that country and the friend reported a very sad situation. The walls were down in the city, the gates were destroyed, the Jews were utterly discouraged and disorganized, their enemies were preventing them from doing anything about rebuilding the walls or rebuilding the gates. Nehemiah, who was usually a cheerful man, became so downcast that even the king noticed it and insisted that he tell what the trouble was. And he told him what this word was from Jerusalem. And, because the king seemed rather sympathetic, he took his courage in his hands and asked if he could go back to the city and see what he could do in rallying the people and

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<sup>3</sup> Gerald Kennedy, Sermon: "I Will Not Come Down," Record "W-3245-LP," Side 2, Word Record Company.

organizing the people and rebuilding the walls. And the king gave him the permission, you remember, and provided him a pass through his empire--even gave him a document which would allow him to use materials for the rebuilding project.

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem. And there he found it was just as bad as his friend had said--enemies round about attacking, the people discouraged--nobody believing that anything could be done--they were too poor. And he organized the people and he brought them together and he gave them new hope--a new courage--like a new preacher will do sometimes to a discouraged congregation. And he gave this group this job to do, and this one this, and they began to move--began to work. And he writes in his record that while half the men worked on the walls the other half stood guard to hold back the attack that might come any moment. And they held it back and they began to build and the progress was apparent to everybody. And then the enemies tried another attack--they began to whisper things. Finally they insisted that if Nehemiah did not come down and consult with them they would send word back to the king that he was subversive--he wasn't loyal--that he had ambitions to take the place of the king. And when this had gone on and finally they had threatened him, then Nehemiah sent this word to them: "I will not come down. I am doing a great work."

Now I don't know how you feel about it today, but it seems to me that word is spoken to us. I have a feeling that we live in a time somewhat like that with all these whispering voices saying to us, "Come down and talk with us and take us into consideration or we'll tell

stories about you." And I want to talk about that. I want to say, to begin with, that we should not be surprised that this kind of thing happens to us--this kind of opposition is everywhere and constant. You will find it in good organizations as well as bad. The preacher who thinks that because he's engaged in a good work will be from this sort of thing is too naive to be a preacher. Of course you will face it. There are some of us who think that we ought to be exempt from this--nobody's exempt--and no institution.

This is a great shock that comes to people who join the Church late in life--they find it isn't as good as they thought it was. I have a friend, a very close friend, who I finally talked into joining the Church and bring his family into it. He's become quite an active layman but you know every time I see him I have to spend some time explaining why the Church isn't better than it is and why he has to deal with things which are just as bad as he deals with in his business. Great shock to him--that you're not all saints--no shock to me. I've been in it too long. But the man who comes in from the outside with his idealistic idea of the Church--this is the thing--why aren't Church people better? Why are they petty and small and sometimes mean? Why? I don't know--except that the Church is a human situation, as well as being the body of Christ, and you'll find it there as well.

When I was pastor of a church in Palo Alto, this was a long time ago, I had an old couple who came in from the country every Sunday. They drove an old car. And one Sunday the old gentleman forgot--or ignored, anyway--a stop sign and there was a policeman there and gave

him a ticket--on Sunday morning, going to church. Well, the old man was just shocked and angry--"Imagine," he said, "getting a traffic ticket going to church." Why not? In fact, he threatened not to come any more if this was going to happen to him--he thought society ought to make some kind of an exemption for a fellow on his way to church. It doesn't. You might as well just come to terms with that--you're going to find it in the Church as well as everywhere else. And a man will find ~~sometime~~ his counseling experience--that after he has spent countless hours and all kinds of patience, he will not find much appreciation. Maybe he won't find any. Maybe he will discover that all he has attempted--that all he's really accomplished is that the people now, both of them, blame their problems on him.

I had a man one time who was fifty years of age who fell in love with a girl eighteen and she thought she was in love with him and any fool could tell that won't work. But he couldn't and she couldn't. And I can remember that when I listened a good deal and tried to point out the problems how finally he said he knew it wouldn't work and called it off--how angry that young woman was with me. I couldn't repeat to you this morning what she said to me. I take some joy in remembering that a few years later I met her with a husband somewhere near her age and five children. And she was very, very happy.

I remember a young preacher who came to me one time and said, "I'm going to divorce my wife." I spent days with that boy trying to make him understand that he made promises--what it would do to his witness and to his career--and when he went right on and persisted in it and

finally broke up his home, guess who got blamed--I did. His wife was very much upset. Well, this part of the game and this is the thing you expect. If you're doing a good work you will not be appreciated because it's a good work. If you're always perfect and high-minded. Not so. I saw, some time ago, the treasurer's report to the official board at the end of one month and one item really intrigued me--it said "termite control, \$12.50." I wish I could control the termites in any church for \$12.50. Don't you? Can't be done.

But what I'm trying to say to you this morning--don't be so upset when this happens. This is a part of our ministry, it's a part of our membership in the Church. We must adjust ourselves that there will always be people saying, "Come on down here and live on a lower level where we are, down in the mud."

Now, who are these folks? Well there are three or four types I think you'll discover nearly everywhere. There are, for one thing, the trouble makers. This is the old man who said one time on the official board, "Nothing will pass unanimous as long as I'm a member." These are the people who aren't very creative, they can get no attention because they're doing something, but they get a lot of attention if they're against something. Always trying to stir up trouble. You have a meeting of one mind, you have a group of people with a high vision, if they can do it in the name of honesty usually. And this is what disturbs me the most. In the name of being honest people and pointing out some other things, they'll try to ruin it. Now if you haven't anybody in your church like that--you let me know--a lot of fellows would

like to go there.

There are other trouble makers--there are the discouragers--the people who are just naturally pessimistic. I had a fellow in one of my churches who couldn't forget the depression. Well he'd had a hard time--so had I. And he remembered the apple sellers on the street, and he remembered the stock market crash and the suicides, and he remembered the unemployment. And every time in official board meeting somebody would come in with a great idea that the church ought to move in this direction or that, he'd get up and with a doleful expression--he looked like a blood-hound--he would begin to tell us about the depression and all the difficulties of it and then some brother would say, "I move we postpone action" which meant it was dead! Always that fellow around somewhere.

There are the fearful, whose prototype was described by Jesus as a man who had been given one talent and put it in the ground--scared to death. The naturally fearful who are afraid somehow to launch out on anything and would hide in a cave if they could find one--the natural born cave-dwellers who are still among us.

Then there are the scandle-mongers--the people who take great delight in whispering some story about somebody and smirching their reputations--they love it. Why the choir director and the organist were seen in the church thirty seconds before anybody else was there? Ah, some suspicious in that. The preacher's son fell down and he used a bad word! Preacher's daughter put on some lipstick and went to a dance--at the high school, properly chaperoned--but they don't add that.

The people who are just deliberately trying to bring somebody down a little lower with a strange idea that somehow this lifts them up a little.

I was in Poland last summer. In the Missourian Lake section of that country there are some old churches from the Middle Ages--one from the 13th Century, several from the 14th and 15th Centuries--built originally, of course, by the Catholics, then the Reformation came through that country and they became Protestant churches. Then after the war, when a good many Germans were expelled, here were these churches standing empty and the government has allowed the Methodists to have a number of them for their use. We have churches now going back to the 14th Century, long before John Wesley appeared. And one Sunday afternoon I went with the preacher and some other people to visit one of these old churches and outside one of the doors there was an iron ring with a big chain bolted to the wall. I said, "What--what's this?" And the preacher that had studied the whole background of this thing, he said, "A long time ago if any member of the congregation had been found guilty of scandle-mongering, on Sunday morning they--they had this chain put around their neck and they were chained here to the wall and everybody who came to church was supposed to spit on them." That's a little rough, but those ole boys had the idea, really. What they deserve! Every scandle-monger stand chained to the church on Sunday morning--that would be something. Well, here they are. These are the termites, these are the people down below who are always saying, "Come on down. Stop your work. Come on down. Let us tell you why you can't

do it."

Now I want to say a third thing--I want to say this. You will be tempted to go down, but don't do it. This showed the greatness of Nehemiah. You'll be tempted. I really don't know anything much harder to bear than to bear lies about you. It's one of the hardest things a man has to do--to keep silent when somebody's trying to destroy his character. But my brethren if you're worth your salt you'll surely go through it, and when you go through it, read again the story of Nehemiah : "I'm doing a great work. I haven't had time to come down." And even if you had the time it wouldn't do any good. I've learned this, that what reason did not put into a man's mind, reason can't take out of it. You can't argue to these people, you see, you can't argue with these people and say, "You're wrong." They don't want to hear that--they're not interested in that. They are not after the truth. Save your breath, save your time. They're not concerned at all about the truth, they proved it over and over again--they want attention primarily, and it won't work, so ignore it.

I think one of the great temptations of the ministry is to get side-tracked on a secondary issue. There was a missionary one time who said something very true. He said: "The Devil never laughed so heartily as when a Christian goes off onto a secondary front and leaves him in full charge of the primary front." Now you remember that and I hope I can remember it. This is the Devil's way--take you off onto some secondary thing--waste your time there and your energy while the main battle is deserted and he has it all to himself. That's exactly what

he likes to do and that's what's happening in many places in our Nation and in our church. Haven't you been disturbed and shocked by the attacks that have been made on our statesmen by the super-patriots? Can you think of anybody calling President Truman and President Eisenhower and President Kennedy a Communist? Can you? I can't imagine it but they've done it. Can you think of--and this attack that's been made on the Supreme Court of the United States when the called the Chief Justice a Communist? What about these attacks on a man like Secretary Rusk? Well those men teach us one thing--how do you meet them--you ignore them. Justice Warren does not reply; President Eisenhower keeps silent; Secretary Rusk goes down to his office the next morning after the attack has been made and says to his--his--people there, "Good Morning, comrades." Not a one of those men argues back. Not a one of those men tries to remove from these prejudiced minds these lies and these smears. They teach us a lesson: "I am doing a great work. I cannot come down."

We have a little group of laymen in this Conference--I wish I could call them by name--they seem to be curiously reluctant to give their names--who sent out a good deal of material and are attacking a magazine called "Motive". I read "Motive"--it comes to me every month. I don't read it carefully but I glance through it. "Motive" is a magazine for students. I think this would be a true statement that there is probably no church magazine for students that stands as high as "Motive". Other students besides Methodist use it. It's not my favorite magazine. I'd have to confess I think parts of it are

terribly dull--I don't know--I don't know what those students get out of it, but they seem to like it--some of them. Once in a while it has a satire which may go just a little beyond good taste--I don't know--doesn't bother me. The art doesn't bother me because I can't understand it, so I just let that go but I'm a Philistine. I do not say it with any braggadocio at all--I am a Philistine--I don't understand modern art, but I get this one conclusion as I read that magazine, if there's anything subversive in it I can't find it. You see the trouble with these brethren is they have no sense of humor. And people with no sense of humor ought not to read books anyway--they can't tell when it's satire. And they take ever satirical writing and treat it as literal truth and they only succeed in making fools of them-selves. The poor fellows, if they knew how ridiculous this is, they would be ashamed to do that kind of thing.

Now, of course, students are looking at things differently than I look at them and I know they're wrong but there you are. They're different than I am. Some things I take very seriously, they don't. But they are the hope of the church as they blast away so many things we would take it for granted if we could ask questions which I've become too dull to ask. And they come and see some things here that I didn't see and I've missed because I'm a bureaucrat. And they're fresh and new--Oh God save the Church when its students have no opportunity to speak their word to us. And I wish these poor people would not waste their time and energy on such nonsense but would do something in their local church--do something to make Methodists move forward into the Kingdom

more completely. It's a sad thing--what can you do--what can you do?

I get so sick and tired of see--hearing these petitions from various churches against the National Council. For Heaven's sake, brethren, do you know what the National Council is? It's the leadership of the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church and the Church of Christ--a Protestantism coming together to look at our world. If you don't like what they say sometimes, well you won't like everything this Annual Conference says and neither will I. Neither will I! And there are things said all around that I don't agree with completely but Protestantism is committed to this and it will speak a relevant word to the condition of the society it finds itself in and if you don't like that, you don't like Protestantism. And if you don't like that you don't believe in Methodism or Congregationalism or Presbyterianism. This is a part of our heritage. Stop this silly attacking of the National Council. Thanks.

And when we come to our own lives and have this attack made upon us there's one necessary piece of equipment which every preacher ought to have and that's a large waste basket. Brethren, you don't don't have to answer every letter that's written to you, there's nothing in the Constitution that says you do. I have learned that just as there's no sense in coming down from the wall to talk to these people, there's no sense writing a letter in answer to them either. Let it go--let it go--and be caught up in this vision, this hope, this great project.

I was down in Florida--this a number of years ago. I was preaching at a pastor's school down there and one afternoon one of those

brethren took me over to Lake Wales--many of you've been there, haven't you? That's where the Singing Tower is, the Bach Memorial. I read Edward Bach's autobiography when I was a boy--it influenced me profoundly and I wanted to see where he was buried and they took me over there. And I've never forgotten the words inscribed there in that beautiful, wonderful place. This is the way they go as I recall: "I come here to find myself. It is so easy to get lost in the world." And I see the Church as that place where men come, once a week at least, to find themselves--to get the long look and the eternal perspective to find themselves, we who are lost. And if you're going to spend your time down around here arguing with these people, brethren, you are lost, and you'll never find yourself. Take the word of Nehemiah: "I'm just too busy. I'm doing a great work. I can't come down."

Now the last thing I want to say to you--this word of Nehemiah needs to be in our mind. He says, "I'm doing a great work." That helps a lot. "I'm doing a great work and I know it." Are you? When a fellow begins just running around, you know, doing little things--that's when he loses his way. Oh my brethren of the ministry, never lose sight of this--you're doing a great work. If there's going to be any saving of our world the Church will save it. If there's going to be any words that will redeem us it's your word from Christ. Do you sometimes get to the place where all of this little business beats you down? Oh, come back. Come back again and stand with Nehemiah and get the vision of what you're doing and the walls you're building and the new gates that are being built to protect the city and say with him, "I'm doing a

great work." Oh, as Americans, what a work we have to do today. You know the thing that worries me so much is the constant eating away of these Civil Rights. In God's Name, let's build some walls around civil rights. They've been torn down. They've been torn down by the constancy of the "cold war" and the constant crisis until we constantly say, "Let's give this up and let's give this up and let's move back on this." If we're not careful, we won't have anything worth saving. I don't know but what that's just as important question--or maybe more important--not shall we be saved, but are we worth saving? Will we come through, but is there anything about us that's worth coming through? I--I--tell you we better build some walls up around the dignity of man and the civil rights of every person. We'd better do it in the Church. Better come back to the understanding of what the Church is--the dignity of its calling and the divinity of its life and the meaning of its fellowship--build some walls--make it more than a club--that men who come to us understand that here--here is the fellowship of men in Christ--here is love--here is redemption. How I need to build walls around myself--how easy it is for me to be eaten away by the acids of modernity. How easy it is for my soul to become not a quiet, sacred place, but a place out on the market where everybody tramps through it. No great thing is saved. We need in our lives that Holy of Holies which was in the temple at Jerusalem where nobody enters except the high priests and only on stated occasions because that's where God was. And I think of that when I read that great word of St. Paul: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" Build up the

walls.

I close with this: In the early days of aviation there was a pioneer flyer by the name of Handley Paige and one of his long flights in which he was testing air flight--airplanes--he came down onto the field of the nearest city in India. He had to take some rest and when he came back and started off he had only been flying a little while when he heard a gnawing sound back of him and he knew at once what had happened--a rat or more had gotten on board his plane while it was grounded and was gnawing. Now those were the days when ships were different than they are now--airplanes were different. That rat could easily gnaw through something which would keep him from controlling his flight and could destroy him and that was a bad moment. And suddenly it came to him that rats lived in low altitudes. And he headed the nose of that plane upward and he climbed until the air became so thin he could hardly breathe. He knew he did not dare go any higher or he'd black out and so he leveled off and flew at that high altitude--and listen--and he didn't hear the gnawing but he didn't take any chances--he kept it high and flew for quite a long time. And then finally when he came down at his next stop they looked in the back and there was the dead rat. I don't want to press this too far--but there's a lesson in it. Keep it high. Keep the Church's job high. It is true in our religion, as it's true in military service that the best defense is always a strong offense. And if you want to keep clear of the termites and the people who are trying to pull you down be sure that the Church is on the march and that you're doing a "great work."

## APPENDIX E

### Interview with Bishop Kennedy<sup>4</sup>

Question: Bishop Kennedy, what is your evaluation of the pulpit today?

Answer: So far as evaluating it in terms of its importance, I have always thought it is central. But you're thinking, I suppose, more as to what kind of preaching we are getting, what its standing is, and so on. It's hard for me to tell how much it has changed. When I started preaching a long time ago, they were talking then about a moratorium on preaching and a kind of distrust of the whole thing. That was the day when religious education was going to save us and preaching was going to be relegated to a back part. Then down through the days of the depression, the Thirties and the war, I had the feeling that, especially during the war, the pulpit recovered to some extent its significance. Preachers were saying something, they were under fire a lot of that time, and in that day when the people have been coming back to church, at least up until recently. The thing that they want and the the thing that seems to bring them back seems to be good preaching more than any other single thing. They go back to a church where they hear a man saying something that they want to hear. So that so far as its quality is concerned over these years, I imagine it's about the same as it has always been; although, again, today there is a restlessness about how important it is on the part of some, whether we can find some

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<sup>4</sup>Interview by the author and Bishop Kennedy, Nov. 24, 1964.  
Edited and included with the Bishop's approval.

substitute for it. But this is the very day when Catholicism, for example, is emphasizing preaching again, as if they have the feeling that they have neglected it. So I would think that in general it is about the same, at least, as I have known it in my lifetime. I don't think, I am sure, that we don't have any more great preachers, but I doubt if we have any lower level of preaching, any noticeable, measurable, lower level. I think it is about the same.

Question: What would you say as to the real function of preaching in the church program?

Answer: Well, it is still the same main method from the beginning which we have used to proclaim the gospel and to spread the gospel. I don't think that there is a thing in modern life that has made that outgrown. Now a fellow like Raines who begins to talk about small groups in the church and all that--that's fine. I think he has hold of something that's very good on that. But I don't know any church that is developing small groups, that is getting anywhere unless they have a good man in the pulpit. I still have the feeling that the central thing in the program, the thing that holds it together more or less, that sets the direction, is the pulpit, the sermon on Sunday morning. It's the key event in the life of the church during the week, I think. I haven't seen anything to take its place.

Question: As you view preaching today, what seems to be the central problem in it--what lack is there in it?

Answer: Oh, the main problem is dullness, I think. Preachers don't catch hold of the excitement of the thing, of the drama of what they are

saying, of what this gospel is. I read sermons every now and again that seem to me to really be lectures on sociology or psychology and that type of thing. Rather than using these other disciplines to illuminate their point and their proclamation, they turn to become more or less lectures on various subjects. Now that's to miss the whole point of preaching. I think a sermon has to be reasonable and has to be rounded in truth, but it also has a THUS SAYETH THE LORD about it, a proclamation of a great event, of a truth, of a power, an answer, and sometimes I think we have lost that, but then we never had it too much, as widely as should have had it.

Question: What elements in communication are vital to you in your preaching?

Answer: Well, I think it is getting in relationship with your congregation immediately--this conversational approach I think I would put among the first things a preacher needs. You are not up there orating. It is a sharing of truth, a sharing of insight, and it's a matter of bridging the gap between the pulpit and the pew, which usually is caused, I think, by the sense of an orator up there talking down to the people. I think we fail oftentimes to make it simple enough, to use simple language, to use illustrations that will make concrete the abstract propositions that sometimes we are promoting. So that, in my thinking about, I always like to have some concrete illustration for every general principle I am talking about, every general proposition. Organization comes into it--we are afraid of being too simple in our organization. My own feeling is that the way to preach is to say in the

first place this, second place, third place this, which is too elementary for the brilliant young theologues. But I think if sometime afterward somebody can say, well I understood that and I remember this, he said these three things, that means that you have done it really. What else are you after except to get the thing which comes to you as the revelation into the minds of the people that hear you so that they remember and grasp it. If I had to use one word, I think it would be simplicity, which probably is the thing we lack in this business.

Question: What is your opinion of the relevance of words?

Answer: I think some of the theological words probably have to be interpreted all right for out time, but I find over and over again that they are the only words that say what we have in mind. I don't think we can throw aside that so-called religious or theological vocabulary and find something to take its place. I think we have to define and tell people what we mean by redemption and salvation and the incarnation and things of that kind. I never consciously try to pick out small words. I just don't use big words because I guess I am not familiar with them. It always leaves me very uncomfortable to hear a big word in the pulpit, unless a man is doing it for some particular effect, but if you are conscious of a vocabulary that is more difficult, more academic, then I think there is something wrong with the use of those words. Of course, we have lots of authority for this . . . Jesus spoke simply and plainly and the common people heard him gladly, the Greek of the New Testament, the Greek of the common people, all of this. Plain speech is dramatic speech too. You lose the dramatic punch if

you have used a word that falls on the ears of your hearer as being a big word. Drama comes up out of the words of action--verbs, and the simple ones, I think.

Question: Do you feel that your use of illustrations is a basic part of your communication with people?

Answer: Yes, I think so. I think it is basic. You can fall into the trap, of course, of using too many illustrations, just strings of stories, which is not preaching, and is not real communication, in my judgment. But as kind of a rough rule, for every point you want to make in your sermon, you ought to have one concrete story, illustration, analogy, something, that makes plain what you are saying. When I read the old sermons, I have been reading a book on John Donne's preaching, and it just loses me . . . I could no more sit through it for any length of time, I think, and really grasp it or be interested in it. And yet, in his day, he did it that way and I don't know whether we have changed, whether there was a time when we could wrestle with these general ideas and have pleasure in it, whether the people of our time are used to television and the newspaper and that type of thing, or what the answer is for it, but it wouldn't go with us. It's just a simple thing that when you are reading a book and the fellow begins to talk about something precise, you get interested in it, when he isn't talking about it, you aren't interested in it. It may not be in the sense of an illustration in the sermon, but he is talking about a nation or a principle in the nation, but if he says, now here's where it works, for example, or this is what it means in a particular situa-

tion, always your interest is aroused. It's simply a law of attention, I guess, that abstractions are boring and concreteness is not.

Question: What is your feeling about the use of humor?

Answer: I think humor has to be thoughtful--to be used in the pulpit, I mean, it has to say something, or it's hardly justified in being included. But I think it is just a natural part of a fellow if he thinks that way and if something strikes him that way, why probably that's right for him. I have sometimes known fellows, talked with them just as we are talking here together. They were really interesting conversationalists and they had humorous insights and all, that were to me very pleasing. They get up in the pulpit and there is not a bit of that in them, just all gone--this is an altogether different world. It always seemed to me if one of these fellows could just get up there in that pulpit and take some of the same things with him when he stands up there that he does when he is talking to me, he probably would be an outstanding preacher. I don't know why that is, whether we consciously or unconsciously think that this is not to be in the pulpit, this is not conversation up there. But haven't you known fellows like that?

Question: One individual that has heard you many times indicated that there is an intensity in your preaching. How would you equate this with communication?

Answer: Well, I don't know about that exactly, but I would think that a fellow has to feel that what he is saying has some real point; that people, if they hear it will be helped by it or will open their eyes to something. I can't imagine just kind of an easy-going talking in

preaching. It is intense or should be. If it has taken hold of you, if it's exciting to you, then you are at pains to make sure that people that hear you get this thing in it. I have a feeling that maybe some fellows don't get excited about the gospel. It doesn't hit them with any great dramatic punch, and if it doesn't, I suppose they can't say it that way or probably feel they ought not to say it that way. I get terribly excited every once in a while about something in the Bible. Rockets go off when I read something that I hadn't seen before and when I feel that, I want other people to feel that too if I can help them to feel it. This might be some explanation of an intensity or something of that kind.

Question: In regard to your training and school subjects, do you feel your classes in debate and persuasion are an unconscious contribution to your preaching?

Answer: Yes. I only had one first-rate teacher of speech in all my life and that was my high school teacher. I never had anybody afterwards that came anywhere near her. All of the rest of them didn't know what to talk about, in my judgment. They were fooling around wasting my time and theirs. But she was a great teacher and I am forevermore in debt to her. Now she more or less let me go on my own, her criticisms were very quiet and more or less offhand, but as I have said someplace else, she got me to see the importance of getting the stuff clear in my mind, as to what I wanted to say, of progressing toward the main point and, heaven knows, I don't always do it. I had this ground into me from the very beginning that this was the way to speak, this was

debating primarily, as we started. You have got a cause for that, you are making a case, and you are going to make that case if you organize it and move up toward the climax and then stop. But I haven't had very many pleasant experiences with public speaking teachers. She was the only one.

Question: How would you describe your style of preaching?

Answer: I don't know. It's more casual than some; it's for want of a better term, you might call it conversational, I think. It's well, the model oftentimes that I have thought as the best, is a play, a three-act play, for the sermon to have drama in it, but the drama of a sermon ought not to be any antics on the part of the preacher or any particular way of putting it, but in the material itself. I think if a man says of another man, he is a dramatic preacher, it probably means that the preacher isn't doing it very well, not to be a conscious dramatic quality, but just out of the thing in itself there shines this excitement. I don't know what else to say. A fellow can't analyze his own style, I suppose. It's just the way I would do it . . . it doesn't help much. I always think of an illustration I read a long time ago, I have forgotten how it goes, but a gardener was reporting that he and his wife were reading "Barchester Towers", one of the old classical novels, and he said we can hardly wait until the dinner dishes are washed to get to it. But, he said, it really isn't very interesting. Now, what he was saying was, I think, the thing I am trying to put my finger on, that just the story itself, a smooth-running story, would really have something in it that held, that pulled them, and yet it

didn't fall into the category of some blood and thunder story, something exciting that you would think would be that kind of thing. I have always felt that he had hold of the essential nature of drama . . . that which comes out of this quiet situation with great meaning.

Question: How much have you been influenced by Heinhold Niebuhr and Herbert Farmer?

Answer: Farmer influenced me more than Niebuhr. Farmer was the great influence, theological influence, in my studies and my education, I think. I have said, and you probably know this, that I went to a very liberal school and then I came into Farmer's class right from that, and his stuff was in some ways more conservative, a more conservative theology. But it was personalism, I think, that was the heart of it. God confronting us, and, of course, it's dramatic. I think maybe the weakness of a great deal of liberal theology was that it lost the drama. It tried to descend or to flatten out religion into something that was not sudden. We were afraid of anything sudden happening or this confrontation which Farmer always talked about. So that I went through a period when neo-orthodoxy, when it was new, was quite exciting to me, because I knew that it had something that the liberals didn't have. I never could go as far as some of them went in this dealing in paradox, in situations that were uncertain but abrupt. I always felt that if it didn't make sense, if you couldn't say it in such a way that people could see it in their brains and from out of their minds, you weren't really helping them much. There was a time when obscurity was more or less the rule, when you had a feeling that if everybody could under-

stand you, you weren't preaching. Some of the brethren still feel that. I never could believe that--I always felt that if you got to the truth of the thing, even a plain man could understand it. But Niebuhr had an influence on me too, in that he came into this same situation under which I had grown up. In fact, he came under that background, as he writes in one of his books of liberalism, and his word seems to me to be the realization that God is--God isn't just a ground, God isn't something that we build upon, God meets you, God is a person, and that, to me, is about the heart of it. Mostly from Farmer, but also some from Niebuhr. I don't know what school you would call that or where you are on it now, but I think that the existentialists have something of that--this particular situation when suddenly I have to decide, I am face to face with something.

Question: In your presenting of theological truths in your sermons, could you give me two or three truths that you feel are basic or receive constant stress?

Answer: Well, let's see, can I? I think the heart of religious experience, Christian experience, is this meaning business. I'm very suspicious of mysticism. I don't think God overwhelms us. I don't think we get swallowed up--it's St. Paul on the road to Damascus, in the heart of it. We are confronted by something, we have to respond to it. That, I think is the heart of Christian experience as I think of it.

Question: How would you describe your Christology?

Answer: Well, I don't know how to put it into words, I'm afraid. What is my Christology? I don't go along with the brethren who make a split

between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. I think that's a false dichotomy. I don't think you can talk about Christ unless you have some sense of his human life too in Jesus. I can never accept a Christology that ignored that or that assumes that it isn't important. I think then we go wrong. Christianity is a historical religion, grounded in the historical Jesus, and it helps us a great deal to find out what he said and what he did. I don't know what I think about Jesus in many ways, I don't know whether it's an adoption of Christology or what it is really, except there's a unique thing there that never appeared before on land or sea or in human life and in some special wonderful way. Christ was the answer--God was in Christ--God was in Jesus, is the way I would say it, reconciling the world to himself.

Question: (Statement) Incidentally, I read your doctoral dissertation and I have used part of it in my thesis.

Answer: You did! That's a dull thing to have to read. Sin, I think, is bound up somehow in our freedom and the two things are together. We are sinners because we are free. We are sinners because we can go wrong. It makes me shudder when somebody comes up to me and says, "I have always been a good Christian." Well, I haven't and I don't think anybody who could say a thing like that has been either. He doesn't really know what it is. It's this constant failing, this constant taking the wrong turn, this choosing of what we know in our hearts is wrong, but right along with it is this grace that forgives us and redeems us and holds us to the main purpose of the thing and makes us

see what it is and ashamed of what we have done. And so a Christian life for me is this constant awareness of failure and yet this constant awareness of forgiveness and redemption and grace so that you can have it all brought together with a kind of a feeling that I am a debtor, I'm always a debtor and I can never get out of debt, which sometimes worries a fellow, until you begin to see that out of this debt which you owe there has come the grace which is the greatest thing that man ever experiences.

Question: I would like to know how you use the Scripture; how you feel about the exegesis of a passage of Scripture.

Answer: Well, I think a man is bound to be honest in his use of Scripture insofar as he can determine what the book says, what the circumstances were, not to go against that in any way. On the other hand, I think that the Bible is only used properly when it becomes the Word, the living Word, for our particular time, our particular situation today. So that I don't have the feeling that Biblical preaching is really what it ought to be by just retelling an ancient story. I think if it doesn't have some word to speak to us, some significance in this particular situation, some interpretation for us, it is not much value. So I trust that I don't go against the spirit of it, but sometimes I expect I would take some liberties, in saying that. He might have had this in mind, or this is back of this, this is the general field in which we are. I don't get excited as I once used to get about making sure that I know exactly who the author was and when it was written. I wouldn't have any hesitation, for example, when speaking of "St. Paul's"

letter to the Colossians or to the Ephesians. I wouldn't think it was necessary for me to give a long talk in the middle of a sermon of why he didn't write it or maybe it is a later development. Now maybe that's a carelessness that has come on me with age, but it never seemed to me to be relevant anymore, or I don't think people care too much about it. I do have a feeling that the Scripture represents a world in view, a kind of atmosphere in which God is, God rules. Now that's the kind of Biblical preaching I think we must be very careful to be in that atmosphere of the Scripture, always. This is what I try to do, although I am sure that some people would say that sometimes I don't do it--I don't succeed in it. Biblical preaching seems to me called such when it takes the fundamental assumptions of the Bible and uses them in interpretations of our life. You will nearly always find a text or a chapter or a book or an incident from which you can take off, to start with, to get into it, but if you are still true to that world which was created for us by the Scriptures it seems to me that you are a Biblical preacher.

Question: How do you establish what is relevant or what is of importance to people today?

Answer: Out of your own life. I don't know any other way. I preach to myself. What is the word the Bible has for me in this particular situation? This is where your calling comes in as Pastor. What are people thinking, doing, what are they facing, what's the great question of our time, where do we go wrong. Now what does the Bible have to say to that. But I think ultimately it comes about, that it is in your

own heart you find this. If a man reads widely, if he knows people, if he calls on his folks, if he has a little imagination, he will probably find within himself the fundamental question, he will find the fundamental problems of his period and time. Now sometimes there will be instances where he has got to use his imagination. If you don't have any children and hear of parents having trouble with their children and their problems, if you can't move over there where they are, you're in a bad way, but you should be able to do that. But usually the sensitive person will answer his own questions or find his answer in the questions from most of the people that he is listening to, I think.

Question: Was there any one particular preacher who influenced your own preaching?

Answer: Well, it's very interesting--when I was a student in Berkeley at the Pacific School of Religion, we had a preacher at the First Congregational Church by the name of O.W.S. McCall. He was a great preacher. I don't think my style is anything like his at all--he was finished, polished, literary, but I could listen to him, and I did every time I had a chance, and he was the kind of a preacher I wanted to be. He had this commanding insight which came out. I heard Jefferson, the pastor, years ago, at Broadway Tabernacle, preach in the seminary chapel and he impressed me a great deal. He read, which I didn't like, but he had the simple style, the short sentences, the simple words, which I said that's the way it ought to be done. I don't know whether I have heard, Oh, I have heard a lot of preachers whom I admired very much and got something out of, but I have a hard time of

thinking of any one preacher that I said that's the kind of a fellow I want to be. I think McCall probably is the closest to it of anyone.

Question: Do you have any particular book on preaching that has been of value to you?

Answer: Yes, I think the book, I am not sure that this is my first choice, but it comes to my mind right now, was Farmer's book, The Servant of the Word. Farmer was not a preacher, a great preacher, as such, he was a great teacher, but I think, amazingly, in that little book he wrote, there was some great stuff in it. John Oldham wrote a book called Concerning the Ministry. John Oldham was Farmer's professor, in which there was some very good material which I thoroughly appreciated. I have read a lot of books on preaching and all of them have helped me. I received ideas from all of them and nearly all of them also had parts which I disagreed with thoroughly, ways which they recommended of preparation, etc.,--that didn't reach me. There ought to be some other books that come to my mind--I am sure they will later.

Question: It seems to me that in your use of illustrations, you emotionalize the truth, would you agree with that?

Answer: That's a good phrase, I have never used--I never heard that before--emotionalize the truth. It could go wrong on you. But I think I would be very glad to have anybody say that about me. Well, truth--truth is personal. It seems to me that is what we get out of the New Testament. I am the way and the truth. You see truth in a person. Well, that's another way of saying it's dramatic--it's emotional.

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